the weekly Standard

JULY 16, 2012 • $4.95

OBAMACARE, THE COURT, AND THE PEOPLE

JEFFREY H. ANDERSON • ROBERT F. NAGEL • IRWIN M. STELZER

Capitalism's Brave New World

JONATHAN V. LAST

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

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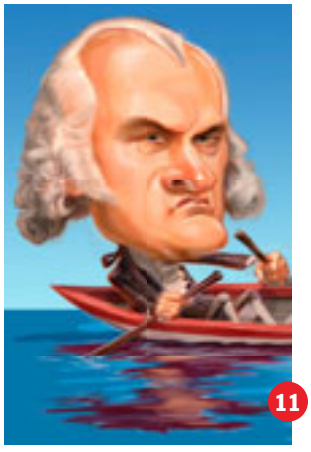
July 16, 2012 • Volume 17, Number 41



COVER BY DAVID CLARK

Particles in Motion

Last week The Scrapbook enjoyed a sensation it hadn't felt since 1995, when Fermat's Last Theorem was finally proved, after 358 years, by Princeton mathematician Andrew Wiles.

Of course, as everybody knows, the theorem—which the *Guinness Book of World Records* lists among "the most difficult mathematical problems"—states that no three positive integers (a, b, and c) can satisfy the equation $a^n + b^n = c^n$ for any integer value of n greater than two. In a particularly elegant formulation, Wiles proved the conjecture in two papers published in the *Annals of Mathematics*—"Modular elliptic curves and Fermat's Last Theorem" and "Ring theoretic properties of certain Hecke algebras"—which The Scrapbook still enjoys perusing on rainy afternoons.

So readers can well imagine The Scrapbook's excitement when the July 5 edition of the *New York Times* arrived at our doorstep featuring this headline: "Physicists Find Elusive Particle Seen as Key to Universe." This could only mean one thing: Some physicist somewhere had discovered a new subatomic particle that must be the Higgs boson—or "God particle," in popular parlance—which, in the *Times*'s words, is "a key to understanding why there is diversity and life in the universe." (The physicist in question, it turns out, was a team of scientists at a multinational research center in Geneva called CERN, home to the Large Hadron Collider where the experiments were conducted.)

The *New York Times* was shrewd to put the search for the God particle in homely terms: "Like Omar Sharif materializing out of the shimmering desert as a man on a camel in 'Lawrence of Arabia,' the elusive boson has been coming slowly into view since last winter, as the first signals of its existence grew until they practically jumped off the chart." You can almost see the movie about the discovery, with the Large Hadron Collider whirling violently inside the Alps while a multinational team of physicists yanks the boson into focus.

The *Washington Post*, meanwhile, opted for a plain-English description of the indescribable:

> The Higgs . . . is so fundamental to the universe that, in its absence, nothing could exist. The particle is thought to create a sort of force field that permeates the cosmos and imbues other particles with the property known as mass—the resistance to being shoved around.

The Scrapbook likes the idea of identifying the subatomic particle that, more than any other, protects us from being "shoved around" in an arbitrary cosmos. "Actively hunted since the 1970s," the *Post* goes on, "the Higgs is the final major piece of the Standard Model, which for physics is the equivalent of chemistry's periodic table."

All right; we will stop here.

Now, honestly, does anyone among The Scrapbook's readers have the slightest idea what any of this means? No doubt, there are some physicists and mathematicians in the audience who can explain it all in so many words (and without consulting the *Times* or *Post* stories). But who else can comprehend these arcane details? And we were just kidding, by the way, about Fermat's Last Theorem, which is equally incomprehensible to The Scrapbook.

The Scrapbook does not mean to sound unpardonably philistine, and we take it on faith that the apparent identification of the Higgs boson is another step in our scientific understanding of the universe. All hail the multinational team of scientists in Geneva! But is there a journalistic spectacle more comical than newspapers relating a shipment of inscrutable information in the same terms used to describe the trade of a reliever for a veteran first baseman?

If fully comprehending the meaning of the "God particle" requires understanding anything remotely like Fermat's Last Theorem, The Scrapbook would just as soon leave Omar Sharif unfocused in the shimmering desert. ♦

The Obscenity of Obamacare

The Scrapbook does not pretend to be particularly innocent, let alone oblivious to the salty language that is common parlance when discussing politics. An occasional expletive can be used to great rhetorical effect, even if we don't necessarily condone its frequent usage. The late, great John Wayne was fond of handing out engraved cigarette lighters to politicians with the message that one should, metaphorically speaking, not-so-gently engage in carnal relations with communism. And there should be no illusions about how politicians talk privately—Nixon's secret recordings will pin your ears back, and recall how a live mike accidentally caught Dick Cheney commenting on the proctological enormity of a certain *New York Times* reporter.

That said, our inner fuddy-duddy recoils in disgust from the casual obscenity that seems to have become a routine feature of the president's reelection campaign. In the wake of last week's Supreme Court ruling upholding Obamacare, the president tweeted that his unwieldy health care legislation was "still a BFD," with a link to a $30 T-shirt on his campaign website with that same message on it. This, of course, was a reference to Joe Biden's infamous hot mike moment at the signing of the legislation where he referred to the bill as a "big f—ing deal."

This isn't an isolated incident, either. White House press secretary Jay Carney recently admonished

reporters not to "buy into the B.S. that you hear about spending." Stephanie Cutter, the singularly grating operative in charge of the Obama campaign's "Truth Team," has also repeatedly accused the president's opponents of spreading "B.S." in official campaign videos and messages.

Making matters worse, the GOP, nominally the party of traditional cultural values and standards, is starting to get into the act. The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) posted a photo on its Facebook page of a T-shirt that reads "Obama Care Still a BFTax." According to the NRCC, if the photo got shared 5,000 times they would start selling the T-shirt.

We'd like to see the GOP keep it clean, but at least they were making a specific point in response to the president's vulgarity. Which brings us to perhaps the worst thing about vulgarity in political messaging—it makes for bad messaging. Swearing, The Scrapbook was always taught, is the recourse of those lacking the facility with language to get their point across otherwise. (In this respect, it's Joe Biden's métier.)

The spectacle of a White House press secretary and head of a presidential campaign's self-described "Truth Team" decrying B.S., when their job is to sling it, is unseemly to say the least. And who among us does not think that Obamacare is a BFD? That says nothing about whether the president's health care reform is a good thing. Indeed, Obamacare is a BFD—as was the *Hindenburg*. ♦

Syrialeaks

While Julian Assange is holed up at the Ecuadoran embassy in London hoping to gain asylum from the rape and sexual assault charges pending in Sweden, his enterprise marches on. Last week WikiLeaks began publishing the "Syria Files," which comprise "more than two million emails from Syrian political figures, ministries and associated companies, dating from August 2006 to March 2012."

The documents—"from the intimate correspondence of the most senior Baath party figures to records of financial transfers sent from Syrian ministries to other nations"—will be published in a number of newspapers throughout Europe and the Middle East and, in the United States, by the Associated Press. While the media buildup surrounding the Syria Files is hardly comparable to Cablegate, the cache of U.S. diplomatic cables published in 2010 by WikiLeaks, the Syria batch is many times larger.

Perhaps Cablegate's most surprising revelation was that the U.S. Foreign Service is a competent and literate bureaucracy that clearly understands the world—even as the State Department's policies frequently suggest otherwise. Since the Syria Files are drawn from a period that includes much of the uprising against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, this project will inevitably show a much darker and seedier aspect of international affairs.

This is the third time that the emails of top Syrian officials have been published. In February, the Internet activist group known as Anonymous hacked into Assad's account and those of other top advisers. In the spring, more emails were released after a source said to be placed inside the presidential palace in Damascus provided access to private correspondence

between Assad and others, including his wife, Asma. The emails portrayed a vain and violent regime, reflecting the character of its chief. But there was something even worse in those emails than regime thugs blowing air kisses at each other while Syrian streets ran with blood. There was the correspondence with outsiders who showed no scruples when it came to petitioning this murderous regime for favors.

The Scrapbook has been keeping tabs for some time now on the American figures who came on bended knee to Damascus, and we'll hardly be surprised to see them appear once again in the Syria Files. There are the journalists—like Barbara Walters, Diane Sawyer, and Bob Simon, among others—who flattered Assad for the sake of an interview, long after the death toll should have counseled against granting him a platform.

Then there are the policymakers. Maybe Nancy Pelosi will make an appearance. After all, she traveled to Damascus in 2007 merely to lend color to her criticism of George W. Bush—in the process lending legitimacy to a state sponsor of terror who had helped kill American troops in Iraq. The man who might very well replace Hillary Clinton as secretary of state, John Kerry, was practically Assad's personal envoy to Washington for a time, praising his reformist credentials until there was finally too much blood in the streets to ignore.

Yes, there will be lots of material from the Syria Files that should prove embarrassing, but probably won't. It's not as though the character of the Assad regime was a mystery prior to the regime's murder, torture, and imprisonment of thousands of Syrians. The foreign courtiers who came to meet with Assad surely understood who the man was, and how he and his father before him had governed. All the regime has done for the last 15 months is turn on Syrians the same weapons that it used against its external enemies for 40 years—Lebanese, Israelis, Jordanians, Turks, Iraqis, and Americans—and none of the Assad regime's interlocutors were ashamed then. Still, we're looking forward to seeing what scatters when the rocks are turned over. ♦

Required Reading

Despite its Luddite tendencies, The Scrapbook is sufficiently *au courant* to be aware that many of its readers are no longer packing canvas bags of paperbacks for their summer vacations but loading up their e-readers of choice. So let us recommend to the non-Luddites that they download contributing editor Joseph Bottum's new Kindle single, *The Summer of 43: R.A. Dickey's Knuckleball and the Redemption of America's Game.* Bottum's winning essay on the New York Mets' celebrated pitcher will charm baseball fans especially, but like all the finest writing on that quintessentially American game, it is a treat for non-fans as well. Here's a short sample:

> *A-Dieu-va*, French sailors used to call out as the command to bring their wooden ships about—a more difficult maneuver than you might think, turning one of those old high-masted vessels and hoping it had enough momentum to swing it through the eye of wind and over onto a new tack. *A-Dieu-va: We must take the chance*, the phrase came to mean in ordinary French, *and trust to God*.
>
> The throwing of a knuckleball has something of the same quality about it. You grip the ball with your fingernails, lean back, and push it toward the batter, across the eye of the plate. And then you wait to see what happens. Sometimes it just floats, a slow, easy pitch any good hitter will crush into the bleachers. Sometimes it drops suddenly, as though it had rolled off the edge of a table, batters swinging futilely a foot above it. Sometimes it flutters like a sail taken aback. Nobody knows what will happen, not the pitcher or the hitter. Not even the catcher who had signaled for the pitch: "You don't catch the knuckleball," Joe Torre once famously complained, speaking for long-suffering catchers everywhere. "You defend against it."

And to our fellow Luddites, we can only say that Bottum's Kindle singles (this is his third so far) are a powerful inducement for making your peace with this new technology. ♦

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

A Brush with Eternity

My wife called me from the pediatrician's office to tell me they were concerned our youngest daughter might have cancer. A short while before, I'd been playing with her when I'd noticed a small lump on her neck. Her annual checkup was approaching, and I told my wife to ask about it. There was much knitting of brows in the examination room, and multiple doctors were consulted.

When I got home that night, we celebrated Linden's third birthday. She had helped her mother make the cake and was so eager to show me the finished product that she was jumping up and down. The impish creature whose tousled curls barely reached above the mound of flames and pink frosting placed on the table in front of her did not seem sick. She certainly had none of the symptoms of lymphoma. At her age, she does not know the meaning of the word lethargy.

Every parental instinct in my body screamed there was nothing to worry about, but the slightest display of doubt by medical authorities is a powerful thing. I wouldn't wish the anxiety I felt at that moment on anyone—so I'll skip ahead and tell you that my daughter doesn't have cancer and is perfectly healthy. The whole episode turned out to be much ado about a renegade lymph node.

Unfortunately, it took two weeks—a veritable eternity—and a number of medical tests to figure this out. In the meantime, my wife and I were left to contemplate the worst. And there are a lot of horrible things that readily come to mind once you're forced to confront them.

Complicating matters, Lindy was just old enough to start to sense that her parents were uneasy and to want answers. I wasn't around for the series of blood tests, but my wife held her in a special chair while the doctors stuck her repeatedly—tiny veins are hard to find. When I asked my daughter about the tests, she demanded to know why the doctors had hurt her so much.

I reassured her, which turned out to be easier than I expected. I really did believe on some level she was going to be all right. Still, I wasn't quite able to convince myself. I wish I could say I'd handled the episode better than I did. All the worry started to affect my mood. Jokes about the impending birth of a friend's child became something I took personally. I spent a lot of time brooding and not enough time working. At one point I confessed to my wife I was afraid I wouldn't handle it well if it turned out that our daughter was very sick.

MATT COLLINS

If you expected my wife to empathize with me, I should probably explain that she's a better person than I am. My wife stared me down and matter-of-factly explained, "Anyone who thinks they can't handle it if something bad happens should probably ask themselves whether they were grateful enough for what they had before they realized that anything was wrong." Most married women will have to contain their surprise at this admission, but it usually takes a while for me to grasp when my wife is right. Yet, this time it quickly dawned on me that having a lot to lose is a blessing, not a problem. For the record, thank God I am married to someone who is much, much wiser.

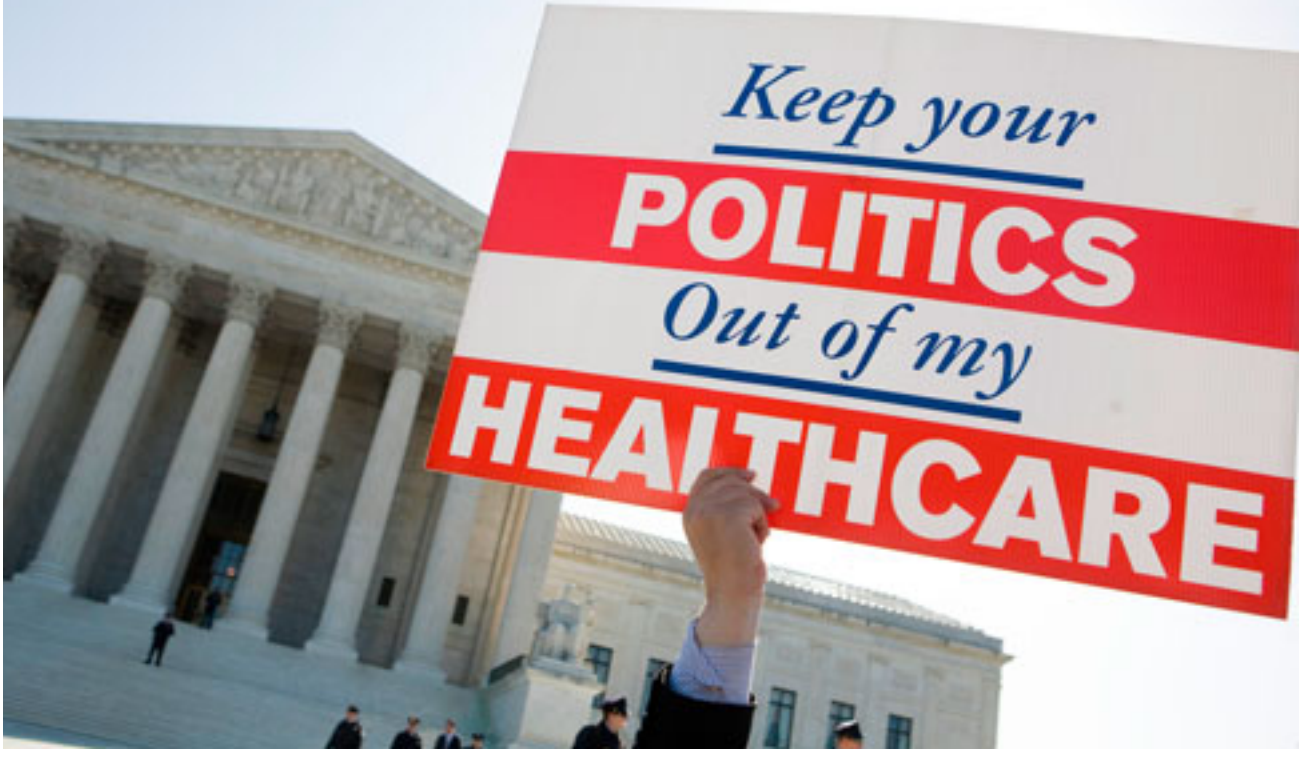
I came to realize that gratitude also entails having compassion for those who aren't always as fortunate. Shortly after my conversation with my wife, I received an email from an acquaintance. Tom had a child born the same week as Lindy, only his daughter was born with a host of health problems his family is still dealing with to this day. He dropped me a line just to say that he had heard about what was happening and knew I was probably worried, but he could tell me from experience that it was important not to neglect your job and other household responsibilities. Little did he know I'd spent much of the last few days staring at the wall on the other side of my desk. I also realized I hadn't given much thought to Tom or the other parents I knew who had gone through genuinely difficult problems with their children. Shortly after Tom's email, I buckled down and got back to work.

I'm glad to report that this story is anticlimactic. Once we finally got in to see a pediatric surgeon, he quickly determined there was nothing wrong and there was no need for a biopsy after all. Poor Lindy almost seemed confused about why everyone was so happy, but she soon got over it. When I took her and her sister out for ice cream that afternoon, she seemed particularly grateful.

Mark Hemingway

the weekly Standard

The Issue of 2012



AP PHOTO / SIPA

The people will judge in November.

Conservatives are engaged in an interesting intramural debate over *National Federation of Independent Business, et al.* v. *Sebelius*—the Obamacare case. But whether they think Chief Justice Roberts deserves hearty praise or contemptuous blame or any of the countless permutations in between, whether they love the Obamacare ruling or hate it, here's the key short-term fact: Conservatives are now set up for a political triumph far sweeter than any contentious win in the courts. The path forward is clear, and conservatives can surely unite behind the indispensable next step: win this election, and repeal Obamacare through the political process.

And of course this won't be merely a short-term victory. Not only is Obamacare the most important issue in the upcoming election, its survival or repeal is crucial to the fate of freedom and prosperity in the decades to come.

The good news is that Obamacare is the issue that most benefits Mitt Romney. Seemingly sensing his weakness on this crucial point, President Obama has tried to suggest to the American people that the matter is no longer theirs to decide. With no shortage of hubris, he declared a week after the ruling that "the law I passed"—note the first person—"is here to stay." When asked a few days earlier by Chris Wallace whether Obamacare "must clear another hurdle in the November election" (which of course it must), the president's chief of staff Jack Lew replied, "You know, Chris, one thing that's great about our system is that when the Supreme Court rules, we have a final answer."

But the Court explicitly reaffirms in its opinion that "policy judgments . . . are entrusted to our Nation's elected leaders, who can be thrown out of office if the people disagree with them." It also declares that, when it comes to the "wisdom" of Obamacare, "that judgment is reserved to the people."

The people will have their chance to render that judgment on November 6, as Romney should repeatedly remind them. The evidence strongly suggests that it won't favor Obama's signature legislation—or Obama. In 99 con-

secutive polls, Rasmussen Reports has found that likely voters favor the repeal of Obamacare. In 37 consecutive polls (dating back to spring 2011), likely voters have favored repeal by double-digit margins. A CNN poll taken after the Obamacare ruling shows that voters in battleground states favor repealing Obamacare by a margin of 60 to 38 percent. The CNN poll also shows that, nationwide, independents support repeal even more than voters as a whole do—and it shows that repeal is favored in every region but the Northeast, and by a 19-point margin (59 to 40 percent) in the all-important Midwest.

But it's not just that voters want repeal; they also regard health care as Obama's weakest suit. A *Newsweek/Daily Beast* poll taken after the Court's ruling asked likely voters how they rate Obama on five central issues. Voters gave Obama by far his worst ratings on health care. They gave him middling net approval ratings of -2 points on "the economy" (47 percent approved and 49 percent disapproved) and -6 points on "creating jobs" (46 to 52 percent). On "health care," they gave him an abysmal net approval rating of -21 points (37 to 58 percent). (Obama's second-worst rating was on "the federal budget deficit," -10 points, 44 to 54 percent.)

All of this is a reminder that Republicans didn't win 63 House seats in 2010 by running mostly on the economy. Exit polling showed that voters then blamed both Bush and Wall Street more on that point than they blamed Obama. Republicans won because they ran against Obamacare and everything it represents: big government, big deficits, lousy health care, politicized everything, and a loss of liberty.

Two years later, the politics and circumstances look remarkably similar. Polls continue to show that voters ascribe more of the blame for the economy to Bush than to Obama. The economy isn't noticeably better, and it isn't noticeably worse. The issue on which Obama is most vulnerable continues to be the issue that he has made the centerpiece of his presidency—but which he would now like no one, least of all his opponent, to talk about.

The American people knew what this election was about even before the Supreme Court drove the point home for them. It's a referendum on Obamacare, and hence on two distinctly different visions for America's future—one being a vision of liberty and prosperity, the other being a vision of coercion and decline. The more Romney emphasizes this—the more powerfully he highlights Obamacare's staggering faults and offers up a vision of real reform—the more likely he is to reach the White House.

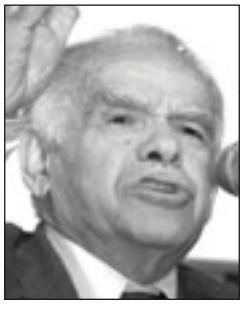
—Jeffrey H. Anderson

Profiles in Courage

"Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us," we are told. So we take this occasion to praise three admirable individuals who died in the past two weeks. Each of them was extraordinary in his or her own right, but each of them also exemplified the virtues of a remarkable generation.

Anna Schwartz, who died June 21 at age 96, was an economist who helped overturn the understanding of the causes of the Great Depression. Writing with her coauthor, Milton Friedman, she showed that government—in this case, the Federal Reserve—helped turn a business-cycle recession into a full-blown depression. More generally, her rigorous scholarship and careful analysis over the years exposed wishful policy-making and put facile punditry to shame—and bolstered the empirical case for limited government, free markets, and the rule of law.

Schwartz



Shamir

Cropsey

Yitzhak Shamir, who died June 30 also at age 96, immigrated to Palestine in 1935. After first serving in the Zionist military organization, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, he led the militant Lohamei Herut Israel—Fighters for the Freedom of Israel—in the 1940s in the fight for Israel's independence. His means were not always respectable, and he did what he judged necessary—though no more. Founders cannot always be fastidious, and statesmanship involves moral dilemmas. Shamir resolved those dilemmas in favor of the safety and well-being of the Jewish people in the land of Israel. Then, as foreign minister and prime minister 40 years later, he resisted pressure for concessions by Israel for the sake of a fanciful peace process—while opening wide the doors of Israel to massive immigration from Russia and elsewhere, immigration that has, as he foresaw, immensely strengthened the nation he served so selflessly and resolutely.

Joseph Cropsey, who died July 1 at age 92, was a professor of political philosophy at the University of Chicago and an early student and associate of the philosopher Leo Strauss. Convinced that Strauss had rediscovered the great tradition of political philosophy and reopened the possibility of seriously encountering the great thinkers of the past, he devoted himself to teaching alongside and working on behalf of Strauss, notably organizing the important volume of essays that he coedited with him, *History of Political Philosophy*. He also compiled his own lasting and distinguished body of scholarship on subjects ranging from Plato to Adam Smith.

Schwartz, Shamir, and Cropsey were by all accounts very impressive human beings: loving spouses and fine parents, good and loyal friends, dedicated and responsible colleagues, individuals of humane disposition and, as it happens, dry wit.

But what is most striking about all three of them is a certain intellectual, moral, and political toughness. They faced challenge and tragedy. They set out against strong currents, joined in the beginning by only a few colleagues, opposed in their various enterprises by large and powerful establishments and a complacent and dominant conventional wisdom. They resolutely faced the odds against them, they were disciplined and intelligent in pursuing their causes, they fought, they persevered, and, to a considerable degree, they prevailed—against all the powers that stood in their way, against all the temptations to go along and get along.

They were strong leaders. But they were strong enough to be willing to follow those they deemed worth following, men of the first rank whom they admired and thought had gotten it right. Joe Cropsey—a considerable scholar and thinker—was willing to serve as a junior partner to his teacher, Leo Strauss. Yitzhak Shamir—a forceful fighter and leader—was proud to serve as a lieutenant to his captains, Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin. Anna Schwartz—who had a more subtle understanding of the relationship of politics to economics than many of her colleagues—was happy to cede the spotlight to them.

What a group! What representatives of a departing generation! One looks up in admiration at their austere courage, their flinty strength, their determination to think seriously about the right path and then set out on it and stick to it—without any expectation of immediate reward or easy gratification.

Their lives remind us of the difference between success, however lauded, and true human achievement, and of the difference between mediocrity, however brilliant, and lasting distinction. And their lives remind us of the moral and intellectual conditions of freedom.

—William Kristol

THE NEW YORK TIMES; NEWSCOM

Promises, Promises

Barack Obama has an accountability problem. It's not simply that during the 2008 campaign he made extravagant promises to heal the planet, slow the rise of the oceans, end political divisions in America, and usher in an era of hope and change. It's that as a candidate and in the early days of his presidency, Obama and his top aides made a series of very specific promises on a range of issues.

As a candidate, Obama promised to create five million new energy jobs alone, claimed that by the end of his first term his health care plan would "bring down premiums by $2,500 for the typical family," and guaranteed that his financial rescue plan would help "stop foreclosures." As president-elect, Obama informed us that he had asked two of his top economic advisers, Christina Romer and Jared Bernstein, to conduct a "rigorous analysis" of his economic recovery plan. The report that he released predicted unemployment would not rise above 8 percent if the stimulus plan was passed. And in the first year of his presidency, Obama pledged to "cut the deficit we inherited in half by the end of my first term in office," "lift two million Americans from poverty," and "jolt our economy back to life."

The problem for Obama is that his predictions were not only wrong; they were terribly wide of the mark. For example, since the president was sworn in, America has suffered a net decline of roughly half a million jobs. According to a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation, the average annual premium for family health coverage through an employer reached $15,073 in 2011—an increase of 9 percent, or $1,303, over the previous year. The 9 percent increase in family premiums between 2010 and 2011 followed an increase of 3 percent between 2009 and 2010. Under Obama, the number of foreclosures was the worst in history. In addition, last year was the worst sales year on record for housing, while home values are nearly 35 percent lower than they were five years ago.

Meanwhile, the unemployment rate has been above 8 percent for 41 consecutive months. The deficit was around $1.3 trillion the day Obama took office in the midst of the financial crisis; according to the Congressional Budget Office, in the current 2012 budget year, the deficit will be around $1.25 trillion. And a record 46 million Americans are now living in poverty.

In addition, during the Obama years we've experienced the weakest economic recovery on record. America's credit rating was downgraded for the first time in our history. The standard of living for Americans fell more steeply than at any time since the government began recording it five decades ago. Income for American families has actually declined more following the economic recession than it did during the official recession itself.

Adding salt to his self-inflicted wounds, Obama, in the heady early days of his presidency, invited accountability. In February 2009, for example, the president told NBC's Matt Lauer that if he didn't have the economy fixed in three years, then "there's going to be a one-term proposition."

Given that Obama's key economic promises haven't been kept, what possible excuse can the president offer? Easy. The president's explanation goes something like this: By the time he took office, the economic situation was far worse than anyone, including Obama, imagined. The deficit was far larger than anyone predicted. The president therefore can't be held accountable for his failed promises. He was operating on a false set of assumptions. The crisis was much deeper than he knew when he made those promises. "We didn't know how bad it was," is how Obama put it last year.

Here's the problem: If you go back and examine the record, you'll find that Obama was fully aware of the depth and severity of the recession. As a candidate, for example, he said we were facing "the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression." As president-elect, Obama said we faced "a crisis unlike any we have seen in our lifetime."

Prior to his election, Obama knew—in fact, he went out of his way to warn us—that we were shedding more than half a million jobs per month, the worst job loss in over three decades. That in 2008 we had lost more jobs than in any year since the Great Depression. That manufacturing had hit a 28-year low. That the stock market had fallen almost 40 percent in less than a year. That credit markets were nearly frozen. That businesses large and small couldn't borrow the money they needed to meet payroll and create jobs. That home foreclosures were mounting. That credit card and auto loan delinquencies were rising. That the economy was "in a global crisis." And that he was inheriting an "enormous budget deficit—you know, some estimates over a trillion dollars. That's before we do anything."

In other words, Barack Obama knew full well how bad things were when he promised he'd cut the deficit in half, when his economic team said that if his stimulus package passed, unemployment would not rise above 8 percent, and much of the rest.

What this means, then, is that Barack Obama's only excuse for his failures is a myth and a mirage—a manufactured, after-the-fact effort to escape accountability for his own words, his own commitments, and his own failings.

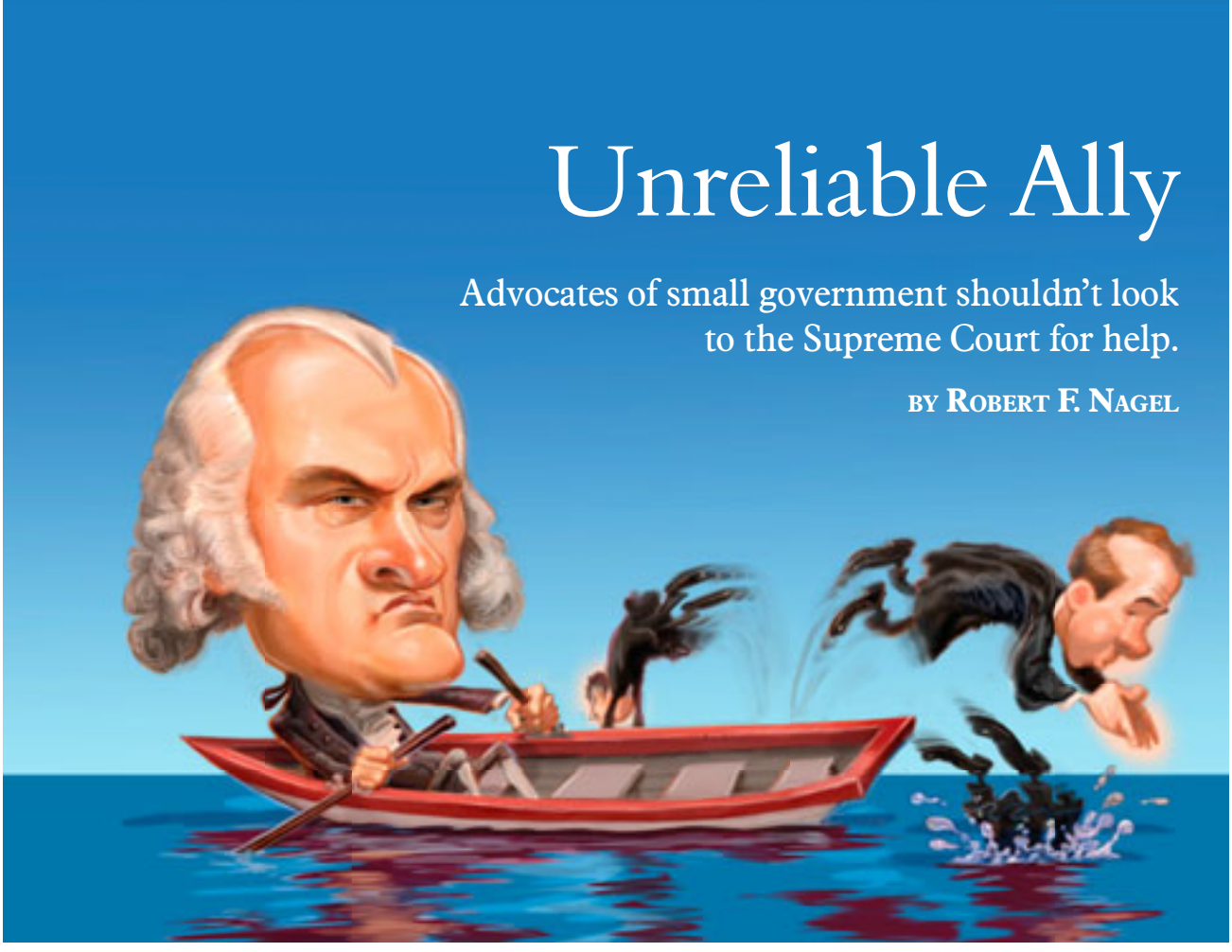
The "We Couldn't Possibly Have Known How Bad It Was" narrative is an understandable one for Obama to resort to. But like so much of what the president says these days, it's simply make-believe. The president has run out of excuses, which explains why for many Americans he's just about run out of time.

—Peter Wehner

Unreliable Ally

Advocates of small government shouldn't look to the Supreme Court for help.

BY ROBERT F. NAGEL



JAMES MADISON, BY GARY LOCKE

As is abundantly demonstrated by the commentary on the June 28 decision upholding Obamacare, the drama of constitutional decision-making by the Supreme Court is irresistible. Such a significant issue decided, in effect, by one man! And that man, Chief Justice John Roberts—is he a lawless sellout to political pressure or a brilliant legal statesman? Is the fundamental constitutional principle of limited national powers gone forever? Or has Roberts laid down a subtle doctrinal roadmap that will eventually allow the Court to save our republic?

The drama, of course, began long before the Court issued *National Federation of Independent Business, et al.* v. *Sebelius*. There was, for instance, the intense, decades-long strategizing that went into trying to select and confirm reliable and principled conservatives for the High Court. There was the grand theorizing about the best avenues for a legal attack on the so-called Affordable Care Act. There was the surprising questioning by the justices during oral argument. And so on. The best part is that, despite the result in *Sebelius*, the future holds rich potential for more such drama—more confrontations over judicial appointments, more intellectualizing about litigation strategies, more landmark cases, more disappointments, yes, but—always—more excitement and hope.

Particular cases, arguments, and individuals are not only dramatic but also, of course, important. Nevertheless, fixation on them can divert attention from more significant institutional considerations. One of the most important of these considerations is that relying principally on the Supreme Court to define and restrain the power of the national government is largely a futile exercise. Indeed, it is a capitulation to the excessive centralization that dominates our politics and our thinking.

The Supreme Court, after all, is a part of the national government. The justices are selected by the other two branches of the national government and, unlike the president and members of Congress, they need have no organizational or political ties to state or local governments. Nor can the justices be replaced through political movements based in the states. Moreover, enhancing the power of the central government over the states tends to enhance the power of the federal courts. (How many health care policies, spawned by the vast bureaucracy that will be necessary under the law just sustained, will have to be reviewed by federal judges?) Conversely, empowering states to resist federal power tends to reduce the power of the national judiciary.

Perhaps just as important, being a constituent part of the national government means that the justices identify with that government. States and localities are far away; they deal with relatively mundane issues; their leaders, operating on a smaller stage, seem

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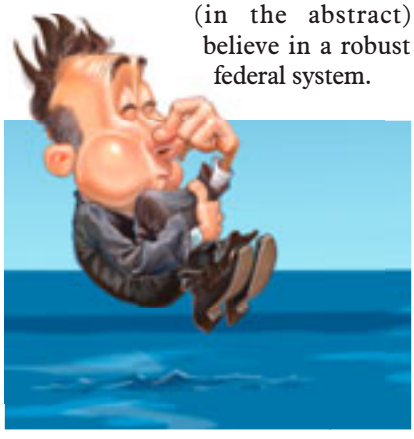
less able and less significant than those who, like the justices, have risen to national prominence. True, the justices must sometimes harbor a low opinion of the national legislative process. But if the two houses of Congress, which convene just across the street from the Court's chambers, are not to be trusted, how much worse are all those thousands of state and local legislative bodies spread out across the nation and doing, well, who knows what? If in the minds of cultivated and rationalistic jurists national politics seems only barely to conceal irrationality, disorder, and unadorned power, local politics must seem a nightmare of dark and dangerous forces.

Conservatives have, nevertheless, invested heavily in a litigation strategy for curbing the power of the national government. The dominant idea has been that the judicial branch of the federal government can be trusted with this task if its judges hold the correct constitutional philosophy. The obvious institutional reasons for doubting that the Court will respect and protect state sovereignty will be overcome, so it is thought, by a rigorous selection process. The answer is to pick justices who are deeply devoted to abstractions like the principle of enumerated and limited national power.

Republican appointees have been a majority on the Court for some four decades now, and *Sebelius* pretty much sums up the result. As in *Sebelius*, the Court's federalism decisions contain some formulations that pay homage to our federal system and hold out some promise for constraining national power in the future. But the promises are usually limited or abandoned, as the Court approves most important exercises of national power, including laws enacted under the commerce power and the power to tax and spend. Prior to upholding the Affordable Care Act, for example, the Court approved the use of the Commerce Clause to regulate the cultivation of marijuana on private land for private medicinal use. This decision relied on and approved the reasoning in the most expansive New Deal-era Commerce Clause cases. Anyone who thinks that the Court will build on its efforts in *Sebelius* to define new limits to the commerce power should look at the whole record in the modern era.

Over and over again, abstract devotion to constitutional principle has been less consequential than the practicalities of the Court's institutional position. And, as was true with Chief Justice Roberts's role in *Sebelius*, the crucial votes are often cast by judicial conservatives who (in the abstract) believe in a robust federal system.



In *Casey*, Kennedy articulated a deep distrust and fear of politics at the state and local level. Indeed, he depicted resistance to the Court's ruling on abortion as anarchic efforts to undermine the rule of law.

The most egregious illustration is the famous 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey* reaffirming the Court's authority to enforce the right to abortion as a limitation on the power of state and local governments. The crucial votes came from three Republican appointees, including Justice Anthony Kennedy, now a hero in conservative circles for his vote to invalidate Obamacare. The opinion that Kennedy joined in *Casey* hardly attempted a serious argument for any constitutional basis for a right to abortion, emphasizing instead that reversing *Roe* v. *Wade* would threaten the Court's position as the nation's ultimate expositor of constitutional law. As others have pointed out, it may well be that in *Sebelius* Chief Justice Roberts had very similar concerns about preserving the Court's authority as an organ of the national government.

In *Casey* Kennedy revealed far more than a frantic desire to preserve the Court's authority. He articulated a deep distrust and fear of politics at the state and local level. Indeed, he depicted resistance to the Court's rulings on abortion as anarchic efforts to undermine not just the Court's position on abortion, but the rule of law itself. Was this a onetime overreaction unique to the abortion issue? Hardly. A few years after *Casey*, the Court invalidated a state law that term-limited that state's congressional representatives. The majority opinion, with which Kennedy concurred, was so frightened by the power exercised at the state level that it conjured an image of the Congress becoming a "confederation of nations." In his opinion, Kennedy added the supremely unlikely thought that term limits might mean that "the sole political identity of an American is with the State of his or her residence." It seems that those dark and foreign forces out there in the states are, even for devotees of federalism like Kennedy, a threat to the very idea of nationhood.

Despite all the evidence, spanning the last 40 years, that putting principled conservatives on the Court can be expected to provide only weak and intermittent protection against excessive national power, the lure of the litigation drama is sure to continue to attract much attention and energy. But the better answer, as members of the Tea Party have intuitively understood, is proud and vigorous political organization at the state and local levels. The *Sebelius* decision makes that the only remedy for the overreach represented by Obamacare. But it would be a serious loss not to learn the larger lesson that politics arising from local communities across the country is also, in general, more realistic than litigation for reining in the central government. ♦

Our Dignified Constitution

Fourth of July reflections on the Queen's Jubilee.

BY GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

It was perhaps inevitable that our Fourth of July celebrations last week might have seemed anticlimactic after the four-day festivities a month ago accompanying the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Fireworks, however spectacular, cannot compare with the thousand-boat flotilla on the Thames cheered on by masses of riverside spectators (shivering and soaking in torrential rain) or the horse-drawn carriage procession (again, the streets lined with people) from Westminster Hall to Buckingham Palace, the Queen regally bedecked and costumed. (Surely the Queen's hats are costume pieces.) A panorama worthy of Hollywood, it was described, televised, and enthusiastically hailed throughout the world, with the Queen as the star of the show, a worthy successor to that other Good Queen Bess whose name she bears.

On second thought, it is the Jubilee that, to an American at least, may be anticlimactic, a display of mere "virtual reality"—in contrast to the Fourth of July, which commemorates a truly momentous event. In liberating us from that monarchy, the Declaration of Independence delivered a devastating blow to the very idea of monarchy, preparing the way for a Republic that was not only a new form of government but also a new social order. Almost in that instant, the New World made the old monarchical world appear archaic and obsolete. It is as if we had ushered in modernity itself. Now, in the twenty-first century, with modernity so far advanced that it threatens to be superseded by something called post-modernity, we have been regaled with a "reality show" glorifying an institution that seems to defy modernity, flaunting a monarch who is the token figurehead of a commonwealth that is itself a token remnant of the British Empire.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip

Today, when Americans find the very word "lady" suspect, we are shown the British paying homage not only to Ladies (officially titled and properly capitalized) but also to Princesses, let alone the Queen. And while we have discarded, in the name of equality, such courtesies as men opening doors for women, we are regaled with images of commoners, however exalted in other respects, curtsying to the Queen (and Princesses of lesser title curtsying to Princesses of blood). Indeed, those "commoners" (the name itself, to an American ear, is invidious) are not citizens but subjects of the Crown. And these social amenities do not begin to take into account such more serious anomalies as the cost of the royal households in a period of economic crisis and severe austerity. To an American, the monarchy is surely Britain's "peculiar institution," as slavery was ours. And the Jubilee, celebrating the monarchy, is surely a triumph of nostalgia over reality.

Or perhaps not. In paying tribute to the Queen—the grace and dignity with which she carries out her ceremonial duties—the British are testifying to her real public function, which is to reassert, in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, the unity, continuity, and vitality of the polity as well as society. This is why there has been, in recent times, no whiff of the abolitionism (the abolition of the monarchy, in this case, rather than slavery) that was a recurrent theme in earlier British history. A letter to the London *Times* rebuked a reporter who invoked the good behavior of the Queen as an argument in support of the monarchy. This is irrelevant, the correspondent protested: "To approve of the Queen because she is 'good at the job' rather suggests republican sympathies," implying that a Queen who was less "good at the job" would warrant the abolition of the monarchy. The same objection might be made to an article in the *Wall Street Journal* which explained why Americans should "hail the Queen." "Slyly witty and supremely dutiful, she is the glue holding together a modern, multicultural Commonwealth"—as if it were the wit and dutifulness that provided the glue, rather than the sentiments attached to the monarchy itself. Almost in passing, the article cited the Victorian writer about the monarchy who warned, "We must not let daylight in upon magic."

In fact, it was that eminent Victorian, Walter Bagehot, who let daylight in by exposing the magical function of the monarchy. Bagehot's *The*

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Gertrude Himmelfarb is the author of The Moral Imagination *and, most recently,* The People of the Book: Philosemitism in England from Cromwell to Churchill.

English Constitution is outmoded in some respects; it was written in the two years before the passage of the 1867 Reform Act, which was a major advance toward democracy. But it is still a remarkably perceptive analysis of the monarchy—of the monarchy then and, more provocatively, of the monarchy now, in the most democratic and modern of times.

Any successful constitution, Bagehot maintains, consists of two essential parts: "First, those which excite and preserve the reverence of the population—the *dignified* parts, if I may so call them; and next, the *efficient* parts—those by which it, in fact, works and rules" (italics in the original). Practical men might like to do away with the first. They look only to means and results, and in that equation the dignified appear to be useless. But even as a practical matter, that is mistaken, for it is the dignified parts that give "force" to government and "attract its motive power"; the efficient only utilize that force and employ that power. The dignified "raise the army, though they do not win the battle." But without the army, there would be no battle.

These remarks appear early in the book in the chapter on the cabinet, as if to remind the reader that even that most efficient part of the government is of secondary importance to the monarchy, the dignified part. The following chapter on the monarchy (which, appropriately, is twice as long as that on the cabinet) opens unambiguously: "The use of the Queen, in a dignified capacity, is incalculable. Without her in England, the present English government would fail and pass away." The "best reason" for the strength of the monarchy, Bagehot explains, is that it is an "intelligible government." The figure of the monarch, in the person of the Queen, is easily seen and understood, capturing the imagination and engaging the feelings of the people. She is not only the visible head of the government, she is also the visible head of society, of religion, and of morality, thus enlisting those formidable institutions in support of the government. "Lastly," and "far the greatest" reason for the strength of a monarchy, is that "it acts as a disguise. It enables our real rulers to change without heedless people knowing it."

That last and "greatest" reason might seem to be at odds with the first, "best" reason, the "intelligible government" which now appears to be a government in "disguise." In fact, the two are of a piece. It is precisely because the monarchy is visible and therefore intelligible that it can so successfully disguise the changes going on in the efficient parts of the government. The monarchy thus assures the unity and continuity of government even as cabinet ministers and members of parliament, parties and policies, issues and controversies come and go.

A modern reader, particularly an American reader, might well be offended by the image of a people so unintelligent as to require the spuriously "intelligible" symbol of the monarchy; a "heedless people" incapable of understanding the ideas or activities of their "real rulers"; the "masses" who are "not fit for elective government." In defense of Bagehot one might say that he did respect the intelligence, that is, the common sense, of the people in their common lives and affairs. What he did not respect is their ability to cope with the intricacies and complexities of politics. Thus, he opposed the extension of the suffrage in England which would have given the people an active role in government. And he was hostile to the American republic, which presumed to do just that. Indeed, much of *The English Constitution* is devoted to a contrast between the American and the English systems.

It is curious that nowhere does Bagehot comment on the title of his book. "English," rather than "British," required no comment, because it was the common usage at the time. But "Constitution" did, particularly in the capitalized form in which it appears throughout the book. Bagehot, of course, uses the term in its lower-case, generic sense, referring to that body of common law and institutions that had governed England for centuries. But after the passage of the American Constitution (properly capitalized), which was deliberately debated and formally promulgated as a single document setting forth the binding articles of government, the contrast with the British informal constitution was all the more pronounced. Had Bagehot reflected upon the word itself, he might have said that the very act of writing a constitution, let alone a republican constitution, is evidence of a faulty government, artificial, contrived, and therefore unsound. Instead his critique of the American Constitution focuses on the separation of powers, which critically impairs the efficient part of government, and, more fatally, on the lack of any dignified part.

The Americans, he observes, could not have become monarchical, even if the Constitutional Convention had so desired, because the people lack "the mystic allegiance, the religious reverence, which are essential to a true monarchy." Elsewhere, however, describing the clumsy technicalities and "absurd fictions" invoked to amend the U.S. Constitution, he likens the Americans to "trustees carrying out a misdrawn will," hampered "by the old words of an old testament." The Constitution as an "old testament"—surely this suggests something like a mystic or religious "reverence," not unlike that characterizing a monarchy.

Rebutting Bagehot, an American might defend the separation of powers as making for a government at least as efficient as the English, and might find in the Constitution itself a quality that has all the dignity, even the reverence, he attributes to the monarchy. Indeed, an American might venture to suggest that the Constitution—not one part of it but the whole of it—is a more reliable source of dignity and reverence than the monarchy, precisely because it is not dependent upon the personal character of a monarch. Not all English monarchs, after all, have displayed the dignity or warranted the reverence of the present Queen. Americans recall all too well the less than admirable monarch who presided over England to such ill effect at the time of the Revolution.

Bagehot has only two passing references to George Washington, the president who deliberately refused to assume, in his person or public role, anything suggestive of a monarch. Instead, in his Farewell Address, Washington took the occasion to pay tribute to the Constitution. The Constitution, he reminded his "Friends and Fellow Citizens," must be obeyed by all because it is "sacredly obligatory upon all"—"sacredly" going beyond the merely "dignified." Almost half a century later, the young Abraham Lincoln, speaking to a young men's society in Springfield, Illinois, on the subject of "the perpetuation of our political institutions," echoed that sentiment: "Let reverence for the laws . . . become the *political religion*. . . . Let those materials [founded in reason] be molded into *general intelligence*, *sound morality* and, in particular, *a reverence for the constitution and laws*" (italics in the original). Again, "reverence"—not for a person but for a Constitution that transcends persons, as it also transcends parties, politics, and all the other divisive tendencies that afflict government.

Concluding the famous *Federalist* 10, James Madison beseeched his countrymen to create in the Union "a Republican remedy for the diseases most incident to Republican Government." The Constitution itself is part of that remedy. It has to be interpreted, to be sure, most notably by the Supreme Court. But the justices of the Court, whatever their private views, have to defend their rulings by appealing to the Constitution. This is their final authority, their "Old Testament"—as it is of the American polity as a whole.

It is that Testament that we celebrate on the Fourth of July. Our festivities might lack the drama or pageantry of the Queen's Jubilee; they occur, after all, annually, and do not have to await a sixtieth anniversary (or fiftieth, the Golden Jubilee, a decade ago). But they are every bit as jubilant, and deservedly so, for they pay tribute to a republic presided over by a Constitution worthy of the dignity—and, yes, reverence—we have bestowed upon it. ♦

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The Negotiation Delusion

Iran talks fail again.

BY JOHN BOLTON

The ongoing failure of talks concerning Iran's nuclear weapons program, most recently in Istanbul on July 3, is no surprise. This latest negotiation charade between Iran and the Security Council's five permanent members plus Germany (P5+1) is the culmination of 10 years of innumerable diplomatic endeavors. These efforts rested on the erroneous premise that Iran could be talked out of its decades-long effort to build deliverable nuclear weapons.

Iranian long-range missiles

Now, almost no one argues there is light at the end of the negotiation tunnel. The most they hope for, especially President Obama, is that the plain futility of diplomacy's latest pretense will not lead Israel to attack Iran's nuclear program before our November 6 election. Obama fears such an Israeli strike more than he fears Iran actually fabricating nuclear weapons because of his dangerous misperception that a nuclear Iran could be contained and deterred. Even worse, Iran fully understands Obama's thinking, and sees no reason to believe it will change if he's reelected.

We are well past the point where sanctions against Iran's nuclear program achieve more than making their proponents feel good about "doing something." They neither restrain Iran's nuclear program nor effectively advance the goal of replacing the mullahs with a regime that would truly forswear nuclear weapons. Combined with material assistance to Iran's extensive opposition, sanctions could help destabilize Tehran, but unfortunately both the Obama and Bush administrations have failed on that score.

And even Team Obama does not believe sanctions will stop Iran's weapons program. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on June 30, for example, that "the pressure track is our primary focus now, and we believe that the economic sanctions are bringing Iran to the table." That is a far cry from actually terminating the weapons program. Moreover, what would a negotiated deal look like? Our goal is to deny Iran nuclear weapons; Tehran manifestly wants the opposite. What is the compromise? Iran gets to keep a small nuclear weapons program? Not even the most effervescent Obama supporters (publicly) endorse such a result.

The fundamental problem today is that there simply is no effective,

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enforceable sanctions regime that will compel Iran to abandon its nuclear aspirations. It may once have been possible, a decade ago or more, but even then would have required full, active cooperation from Russia, China, and others; comprehensive sanctions, not the ad hoc structure actually created; armed enforcement; and checkmating Iran's highly successful cheating and evasion efforts. That theoretical chance has long since disappeared.

Instead, Obama surrogates argue that Iran would renounce nuclear weapons if permitted to keep a "peaceful" nuclear program under international monitoring. In theory, such a deal should be easy, since Iran already loudly contends it has no weapons ambitions. But both Bush and Obama erred by conceding that Iran has any right even to "peaceful" nuclear activities without fundamental regime change. No nation that has so egregiously violated its treaty obligations (as Iran has violated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by seeking nuclear weapons) has a right to claim benefits under the same agreement. Tehran has no credibility here. The mullahs will never agree to an intrusive verification mechanism that could actually detect systematic cheating; indeed, they reject it for a more fundamental reason: Exposing such impotence against foreign governments could spur Iran's domestic opposition to challenge and endanger the regime itself.

Many who agree diplomacy has failed still support sanctions, computer virus attacks, and even targeted killings, hoping thereby to stop the nuclear program without resorting to military force. In fact, such efforts have been underway for years with no evidence they have materially slowed Iran's program. There is a reason. All these steps are simply tactical responses, thrown in over time, against Iran's passion to achieve what it feels is a strategic imperative. Just as military commanders learn through training or sad experience that deploying their reserves piecemeal will lose both the battle and the reserves, the piecemeal deployment of antinuclear tactics has simply provided Iran space to adjust and deploy countermeasures.

If commentators and the press had longer attention spans, they would recall the history of nearly 10 years of sanctions imposed on Iran, unilaterally by America, Japan, and others, more broadly by the European Union, and even more broadly by the Security Council. The net effect is that Iran continues to plow ahead. As Obama's director of national intelligence, Lt. General James Clapper, testified in January, "the sanctions as imposed so far have not caused [the Iranians] to change their behavior or their policy."

Iran has been anticipating sanctions for years, not starting yesterday. Advance planning has defeated some measures before they were even imposed. Sanctions advocates once stressed, for example, prohibiting exports of refined petroleum products to Iran, taking advantage of the curious reality that, though a major petroleum exporter, Iran had inadequate domestic refining capabilities. In anticipation, Iran attracted substantial capital from China and elsewhere to build new refining capacity; dramatically scaled back domestic gas subsidies, driving up prices and effectively reducing current demand; and took steps toward using its enormous natural gas reserves to fuel public-vehicle fleets like urban mass transit and military vehicles. Today, refined-petroleum sanctions are effectively no longer under consideration.

We are told the latest round of oil and financial sanctions is different, but already analysts see them failing, because of extensive Obama administration waivers, lax EU enforcement, and massive fraud, deception, and misinformation by Iran. Iran took advantage of the oil price runup starting in the early 2000s to accumulate huge foreign currency reserves. It has designed and deployed worldwide money-laundering capabilities, creative but entirely false statistics, and oil-smuggling techniques that would make drug cartels envious. Perhaps most important, Tehran's mullahs have the will to prevail, certainly in any contest with the Obama administration.

However much economic pain sanctions are causing (a reasonable debating point), no one has produced a scintilla of evidence, despite the hosannas greeting the newest sanctions, that they have actually changed Iran's behavior since Clapper's January testimony. The only corroboration is Iran's early July missile tests, general saber-rattling, and smug attitude about the P5+1 negotiations. There is much administration talk about "Perm Five unity," but in fact Russia and China have a strategic national interest in preventing us from succeeding. Even if Moscow and Beijing truly oppose a nuclear Iran, they will not, for their own broader reasons, let the West bend Tehran to its will. Just as they continue to protect Syria's Assad regime, an Iranian satellite which has neither substantial oil nor its own nuclear weapons program, Russia and China see Iran as a test case in limiting American power. And they are succeeding.

Focusing on half-steps simply provides more time for Iran's nuclear efforts. If we make the appropriately humble assumption that our Iran intelligence is not perfect, then we must acknowledge that Iran *may* be even closer to weaponization than we believe. And every additional day simply increases Tehran's advantage.

In the race between the West's sanctions/negotiations track and Tehran's nuclear weapons track, the nuclear effort is much closer to the finish line. Since all other options have failed repeatedly, we must at some very near point face a basic question: Are we prepared to use force at a time of our choosing and through means optimal for us rather than for Iran's air defenses, or will we simply allow Iran to have nuclear weapons under the delusion it can be contained and deterred? The clock is ticking, and the centrifuges are spinning. ♦

Subsidies Old and New

The system Obamacare destroys.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

President Obama has one thing right: Obamacare will end the process by which insured patients, or those capable of paying from their own pockets (e.g., the rich Saudi princes who inhabit the best suites in our hospitals), subsidize patients who show up in the emergency room, are treated, and then cannot pay their bills. That raises the cost charged to insured and self-paying patients as hospitals recoup their bad debts from caring for the poor.

But let's talk about what subsidization in health care is really like, or at least until now has been like. When I was a kid on the Lower East Side of New York City, the family doctor operated out of his apartment on the ground floor of what today would be called a brownstone. Some of his patients paid cash, at varying rates based on the doctor's understanding of the financial circumstances of his neighbors. Those who were really strapped paid either in kind—chicken soup was one of the coins of choice—or not at all. Those in more comfortable circumstances paid fees somewhat higher than they otherwise would have been to support the neighborhood doctor. Call it subsidization.

Later, when creeping affluence enabled those who did not fully appreciate the romance of the neighborhood's urban attractions (including sewer covers to measure the distance of stickball hits) to move to Queens—apartments with sunken living rooms in large buildings were the escape of choice—and the next generation of doctors took up offices in Manhattan (Queens had so few hospitals that almost no one died in that borough, permitting its boosters to claim a health-giving climate), subsidization took a different form. My doctor, alas no longer with us, having passed from this life taking with him the idea that a doctor can make a house call, considered it his duty to serve the poor at a clinic in a hospital to which he devoted at least one day every week. There I was, once again subsidizing health care for the poor, since the doctor had to make a living, and charge in four days what he would have earned in five had he not devoted some time to the needy. No intervening government penalty if I refused.

Now, subsidization takes a different form, the one that so vexes President Obama. My insurer and I, between us, pay whatever bills our "health care provider" renders. Meanwhile, in the emergency room of Johns Hopkins in downtown Baltimore, the urban poor are being treated—in one instance by the same physicians who once cared for my mother-in-law in that same ER. She and her insurer paid whatever bill Hopkins rendered, as did I for whatever was being done to me upstairs. In effect, I joined my 90-year-old, far from affluent mother-in-law in subsidizing the health care of those who could not afford to pay for their own care.

Fast forward to President Obama and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, aka Obamacare. The act does not, as the president claims, eliminate subsidization of the uninsured. It replaces a system of private, willy-nilly subsidization with a government-organized system of subsidization that transfers income from small businesses to their workers, from healthy to less healthy people, from people with no preexisting conditions to those afflicted with such misfortunes. In short, from those groups from which the government believes it is only "fair" to extract money to a worthier group, needy by whatever definition appeals to the government of the day (those earning four times the poverty level until revised). That this division between subsidizers and subsidized will change with changing political winds there can be little doubt, there being a long history in other programs of increasing the generosity of eligibility requirements.

Nor can there be any doubt that the new government-run system of subsidization will be more costly than the informal system that has extended longevity without generating animosity between those who are, knowingly or unknowingly, helping out their less fortunate brethren; either overtly as has been the case with doctors, or covertly as has probably been the case with many paying patients. The act's enforcers, the beloved agents of the Internal Revenue Service, are, according to the Government Accountability Office, requesting more than $300 million to "continue the development of new systems and modifications of existing systems required to support" Obamacare. Masses of new personal information will be gathered by the estimated 4,000 to-be-hired agents charged with enforcing the new system of subsidization.

Only someone who loves big government for its own sake, and despises arrangements worked out by free citizens with no help from government, could prefer the new system of subsidization to the one it replaces, worked out informally—not perfectly, but then it is the hunt for utopian perfection that got us Obamacare—by patients, doctors, and hospitals in what will soon be known as the good old days. ◆

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Washington Loses Power

And not just from a storm.

BY FRED BARNES

For Washington, this is definitely not the best of times. The town is suffering from a power outage.

The evidence is hard to miss, from Washington's weeklong struggle to cope with storm damage that knocked out electricity across the region to President Obama's inability to awaken the economy, as reflected once again in June's pathetic jobs report.

To make matters worse, Washington is out of sync with the country, at least with the noncoastal parts. The usual response is to unleash the president so he can rally America to Washington's purposes. But the bully pulpit hasn't been effective since Ronald Reagan was in the White House. And Obama has failed to revive it.

The president was bailed out when the Supreme Court upheld his health care program on the flimsiest of constitutional grounds. That, however, did not bring Obama or Washington into harmony with the rest of the country. On the contrary, Obamacare remains a source of bitter conflict.

What's clear is that Obama is no longer a commanding presence, much less a force for national unity. This is important because Washington has always been a White House-centered town. The media, indeed most Americans, look to the president for leadership. He acts. Congress reacts.

Obama has acted clumsily. He's proved to be a poor negotiator, alienating congressional Republicans rather than finding even a shred of common ground. He has turned to issuing executive orders, a sure sign of weakness. Legislation passed by Congress is difficult to repeal. Executive orders can be erased at a stroke of the next president's pen.

Obama isn't the only cause of Washington's power shortage. The capital's political community—bureaucrats, lobbyists, ideological groups, trade organizations, the press, hangers-on of all stripes—plays a role. This body of permanent Washingtonians believes that it knows not only what's best for America, but where things are headed. More often than not it guesses wrong.

The consensus in Washington was that Obama would "pivot" to the center after the Republican landslide in the 2010 midterm elections. He moved left. And according to the prevailing view in Washington, Obama would be a strong favorite to win a second term. But his reelection prospects are no better than 50-50.

There's more. Washington looked askance at the Tea Party, but took the Occupy Wall Street movement quite seriously when it came to town. The *Washington Post* treated Occupy Washington as a group of idealists with nothing on their minds but the betterment of life for all Americans. The Tea Partiers, in contrast, were harmful extremists.

When Obama refused to accommodate the Tea Party message of the 2010 elections, the Washington community followed suit. There was outrage, for example, at the idea that raising the debt limit should be accompanied by cuts in federal spending. That the president might be obligated to compromise with Republicans on the spending issue was not taken seriously.

Here, the division between Washington and much of the country has emerged once more. The expectation in Washington was that Republicans had hurt themselves badly by insisting on cuts. But polls showed the opposite was true. Obama's job approval fell.

Despite this, Washington's negative view of Republicans has hardened, and Obama's self-serving scenario has been accepted. His narrative: I've tried to bring Republicans on board, but they're committed to obstructionism. In fact, Obama offered Republicans nothing to gain their votes on his economic stimulus or the health care bill and little in budget cuts except from defense.

Americans want to like their presidents. But they're not crazy about bureaucrats, either in Washington or anywhere else. Yet Obama is bent on giving unelected bureaucrats greater authority in the federal government. Obamacare and Dodd-Frank, the Wall Street reform bill, created at least 188 new boards and commissions, offices and grant programs, to be run by bureaucrats.

A cherished objective in Obamacare was the new Independent Payment Advisory Board of 15 bureaucrats empowered to decide what Medicare—and thus health insurers—will pay for. The White House also insisted on establishing the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to regulate consumer loans and freed it from normal congressional budget constraints, with funding directly from the Federal Reserve. And now the Obama administration wants to hire 4,000 more Internal Revenue Service agents to ensure Obamacare is strictly enforced.

That's a lot for the public to swallow. And Obama thinks hiring more government workers, especially at the state level, is the key to boosting the economy.

He's been forced to choose between what looks good to Washington's elite and what most Americans prefer. He's sided with Washington. What he's sacrificed is power, most of which comes from outside Washington. ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Terror Is Their Family Business

Why won't the State Department designate the Haqqanis? BY JEFFREY DRESSLER

Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Naziruddin (left) in 2001

The Haqqani network is the most aggressive terrorist organization targeting U.S. and host nation forces in Afghanistan. Founded by aging patriarch Jalaluddin Haqqani, the network is now managed by his sons Sirajuddin, Badruddin, and Nasiruddin, and their uncles Ibrahim and Khalil. They have carved out a terrorist mini-state in North Waziristan, just across Afghanistan's eastern border, where they host a who's who of high-value terrorist targets, including senior members of al Qaeda.

So why hasn't the State Department designated what U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker called "a group of killers, pure and simple" as a Foreign Terrorist Organization?

In a recent letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Senator Dianne Feinstein noted that the State Department announced in November 2011 that it was engaged in a "final formal review" of whether or not to designate the Haqqani network. Eight months later, Clinton has yet to list the outfit.

It's true that the State Department has designated a handful of the network's commanders, but as legislators on both sides of the aisle have pointed out, these individual designations have had little effect on the network itself. At the end of June, the chairmen of the House Intelligence, Armed Services, and Foreign Affairs committees introduced legislation calling on the Obama administration to list the entire organization.

So what's holding up the designation? It seems that the Obama administration has two excuses. The first is that the White House doesn't want to list the Haqqani network because it may upset the Taliban, with whom the Haqqanis are allied, and with whom the administration still seeks to negotiate a settlement upon the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. Moreover, and perhaps more important, the White House fears angering Pakistan, especially those segments of its military and security establishment that have supported the Haqqani family since the Soviet war in Afghanistan, and whose ties to the network have only strengthened in the intervening years.

But of course that's precisely the point of designating the Haqqani network as a whole. A well-coordinated, aggressive campaign would squeeze the outfit's financial resources—while sending a clear warning to Pakistan's military elite that its continued support of a group targeting American troops will no longer be tolerated.

The Haqqani network's financial interests are extensive, spreading out from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Persian Gulf, south and east Asia, and perhaps reaching as far as Latin America. As early as the 1970s, Jalaluddin Haqqani began to cultivate a financial support system in the Persian Gulf, where he made connections with wealthy Gulf Arabs (as well as the Saudi intelligence service), thereby laying the groundwork for his close relationship with Arab sponsors, including Osama bin Laden. Those relationships are today maintained by other family members, like Nasiruddin, who has made multiple fundraising trips to the Persian Gulf.

The Haqqani network also runs legitimate businesses—many of them linked to the economic empire of the Pakistani military and security establishment—such as car dealerships within some of Pakistan's largest cities, money exchanges, and construction companies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Haqqanis' illegal operations include lucrative smuggling networks

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Jeffrey Dressler is a senior analyst at the Institute for the Study of War and author of the recent report "The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat."

to strip timber, minerals, and other precious goods from Afghanistan and sell them in Pakistan and beyond. And the network profits from kidnapping, extortion, and protection rackets on both sides of the border.

While the Haqqani network has hosted a number of international terrorist organizations, it has limited its own military operations to Afghanistan, where its primary support zone lies in the southeastern provinces of Paktia, Paktika, and Khost (P2K). Here the network maintains diversified logistical routes, safe houses, mountain redoubts, and infrastructure required to wage an insurgency against U.S. and Afghan forces and government installations. While recent U.S. and Afghan efforts have somewhat reduced the network's efficacy in these areas, the Haqqanis continue to maintain significant influence, coercing local populations to submit to their rule.

Since at least 2005, the Haqqani network has managed to extend its influence beyond the three provinces of P2K, making significant inroads into the provinces surrounding Kabul. It has expanded its infrastructure to areas such as Logar, Wardak, Nangarhar, and Kapisa in order to plan and execute the spectacular attacks in Kabul that have become its signature. Since 2008, the network has made an assassination attempt against President Hamid Karzai, and against both of his vice presidents. It tried to blow up the Indian embassy in Kabul, and conducted multiple attacks on luxury hotels hosting foreign nationals. Most notably, it orchestrated attacks in September 2011 and April 2012 on the headquarters of the International Security Assistance Force and the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

It seems that the September 2011 operation was the Haqqanis' unofficial response to the Obama administration's peace initiative with the Taliban. The Haqqani network is operationally and financially independent of the Taliban, but it continues to pledge allegiance to its leader, Mullah Omar. If he doesn't want to make peace with the White House, the Haqqanis are not going to cut a side deal. Nonetheless, in August 2011, Ibrahim Haqqani was invited to a meeting with U.S. officials in the United Arab Emirates to discuss his family's presumptive role in peace negotiations. The administration had its answer when the Haqqani network launched two operations against U.S. troops on the tenth anniversary of 9/11. One was a suicide car bombing of a U.S. base just south of Kabul that injured 77 U.S. soldiers. The other was that first attack on ISAF headquarters and the American embassy.

It is nonsensical that the State Department has yet to designate the Haqqanis as a foreign terrorist organization for fear that it might make a group waging terrorist operations against U.S. and Afghan troops less likely to sit for peace talks. The concern that listing the Haqqani network might upset the government of Pakistan is also absurd. As then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen told the Senate Armed Services Committee, the September 2011 attacks were conducted with support from Pakistan's intelligence service.

It's a good time, then, to make Pakistan's military leadership reconsider some of its activities in Afghanistan, like its support of the Haqqani network. With the pending withdrawal of the majority of U.S. and coalition forces by the end of 2014, the White House's ability to shape the region's future is becoming increasingly limited. ♦

Religious Freedom Under the Gun

The Obama administration neglects a key foreign policy issue. BY THOMAS F. FARR

The State Department recently announced that it was dropping coverage of religious freedom from its annual Human Rights Report. The declared reason: to avoid duplicating coverage available in the annual Report on International Religious Freedom.

There may be other reasons. Given the Obama administration's consistent downgrading of religious freedom at home and in foreign policy, this move may be part of a larger reprioritization in human rights policy in favor of the advancement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights.

Whatever one thinks of that initiative, however, the failure to promote religious freedom abroad is likely to have significant humanitarian and strategic consequences for the United States.

We are today in the midst of a global crisis in religious liberty. In two exhaustive studies, the Pew Research Center recently concluded that 70 percent of the world's population lives in countries where religious freedom is severely restricted, by either governments or private actors. And the problem is getting worse. The second report, in 2011, found that between mid-2006 and mid-2009 the situation deteriorated in twice as many countries as it improved.

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Overall, many of the roughly 70 nations with the highest restrictions on religious freedom are non-Western, Muslim-majority nations. Of all the religious groups subject to persecution, Christians came out on top: They are harassed in 130 countries, Muslims are harassed in 117.

However, historically Christian Europe is the region with the largest proportion of nations where hostility toward religion is rising. Social hostility in the United Kingdom has increased so much that that country now stands with Iran and Saudi Arabia in the category of "high" social hostility to religion. French government restrictions have increased, too, moving it ahead of Cuba in that category.

On balance, it is fair to say that religious freedom is not faring well in the lands where it was first articulated. This should be a warning for Americans. Of course, what is happening in Europe does not approach the levels of violent religious extremism and persecution seen elsewhere—torture, rape, murder, unjust imprisonment, or unjust execution.

And yet, the root cause is quite similar: a belief that religious freedom is not only *unnecessary* for human flourishing or social development, but that it *poses a threat* to these and other goods. Such views are not new. Modern tyrants from Stalin, Hitler, and Mao to Mexico's Plutarco Calles, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, and Syria's Bashar al-Assad have sought either to eliminate religion altogether, or to control and suppress it in order to keep their regimes in power. Historically, religious freedom has been the bane of tyrants.

What is new, and profoundly troubling, is that religious freedom is being rejected by democratic majorities as well as authoritarian regimes. The reasons vary. In Egypt, for example, the Muslim majority is loath to permit Christian Copts full equality because that means much more than the right not to be persecuted or the right to be tolerated. It means the right of Copts to run for president, to make Christian arguments in political life, to criticize Islam publicly, or even to invite Muslims to become Christians.

In Western Europe and Canada, by contrast, the problem is an aggressive secularist majority that refuses to permit religiously informed moral arguments into public life. Recently Georgetown's Religious Freedom Project held a major conference in Oxford on the rising tensions between religious liberty and assertions of homosexual equality. In his keynote address, Philip Tartaglia, the Catholic bishop of Paisley, Scotland, noted that one of his priests had expressed fear after watching a popular audience-based television program. The consensus was ominous: Once same-sex marriage is legalized in the United Kingdom, the audience agreed, dissenters should be "pursued by the law."

A church in Indonesia torched by anti-Christian rioters

NEWSCOM

Once upon a time (in the late 18th century), anti-Catholic penal laws in Scotland criminalized the mass and outlawed priests. While Scotland may not be moving in so radical a direction today, it would be foolish to presume that the growing intolerance of traditional Christianity in Europe and North America cannot devolve into persecutory laws and practices. In Canada, it is estimated that since the adoption of gay marriage in 2005, between 200 and 300 proceedings have been launched against defenders of marriage in courts, human rights commissions, and employment boards. The Catholic bishop of Calgary was threatened with litigation and charged with a "human rights violation" for circulating a letter within his diocese repeating Catholic teaching on marriage. (Intimidated, he settled out of court.)

At Oxford, Bishop Tartaglia (who seems unlikely to be intimidated) said that he expected one day to be standing before a judge because of his public defense of Catholic teaching. Some at the conference made it clear that they simply would not brook any "special" consideration for religious ideas, which they argued had no more relevance to human flourishing than any other idea under the sun.

In short, religion in much of the West is no longer seen as intrinsic to human dignity and social flourishing. It is generally understood as merely an opinion and, as a species, a dangerous opinion at that. While it is fine to practice your religion in churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, democracy requires that you leave it there. To bring it into politics endangers democracy.

This malevolent idea, which was famously championed by the American political philosopher John Rawls, is gaining considerable purchase in our own country. It gives reason for profound concern, not only for religious individuals but for the whole concept of democracy grounded in ordered liberty.

And yet, at the very moment when religious liberty is under sustained pressure around the world, contemporary scholarship is demonstrating that societies desperately need it. The empirical work of sociologists Brian J. Grim and Roger Finke, for instance, shows that religious freedom is highly correlated with the consolidation and longevity of democracy, and with other goods, such as economic development, the equality of women, and the absence of violent religious extremism.

The Obama administration has paid little attention to these data. Three recent public statements help clarify why: They suggest the stage is being set to edge traditional religious ideas out of the public sphere, both domestically and in foreign policy.

In his March 2009 speech at Notre Dame, President Obama asserted: "It is beyond our capacity as human beings to know with certainty what God . . . asks of us." In other words, religion is emotive; it contains no basis for knowing with certainty anything—that God exists, or that each of us is equal in his eyes, or that to kill an innocent human being is always and everywhere wrong.

Second, in a December 2009 speech at Georgetown University, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described the content of religious liberty, and of another right she believed equally important, this way: "To fulfill their potential, people . . . must be free to worship, associate, and to love in the way that they choose." This lineup of fundamental rights has become her mantra (see Clinton's May 24 remarks on the release of the Human Rights Report).

Third, in August 2010 federal judge Vaughn Walker overturned a California constitutional amendment affirming that marriage is a union between one man and one woman. In a ruling that pleased progressives, Walker declared the affirmation unconstitutional partly on the grounds that the reasons adduced in favor of marriage, and against same-sex unions, were based on "moral and religious beliefs."

In sum: There is no rational content to religion; religious freedom means the right to worship, but not to bring religiously informed moral judgments into political life; the "right" to love as one chooses is comparable to religious freedom; to make religious arguments against that right is unconstitutional.

These propositions are not yet embedded in American law and culture, but they are no longer outliers. They seem intended to continue the removal from public life of traditional religion-based arguments, which stand in the way of sexual liberation and its fruits—such as the rights to abortion, sodomy, pornography, no- fault divorce, and (already in six states and the District of Columbia) same-sex marriage. They mirror Obama administration health care regulations that define religion as only what happens inside a house of worship.

The propositions also help explain Obama administration actions in human rights policy. The administration took two and a half years to get its ambassador at large for international religious freedom into the job, and when she arrived at the State Department she had little status and few resources. Meanwhile, the administration's LGBT initiative began almost immediately and garnered considerable energy and resources. In its 2010 National Security Strategy—the premier statement of U.S. security policy—the administration asserted that U.S. national security interests were served by a defense of American values. Among those values were privacy and access to the Internet but not religious freedom. Obama and Clinton often refer to "freedom of worship" rather than freedom of religion—the former a very small slice of the latter, which includes the right of religious actors to engage in civic and political life.

Obama and Clinton officials deny that religious freedom has been downgraded in U.S. policy, pointing to the secretary's involvement in persuading Muslim nations to back off their insistence on antidefamation resolutions at the U.N. Whatever the lasting significance of this achievement, it has had little or no impact on the vicious antiblasphemy laws and practices in places like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which victimize non-Muslims and deter liberal Muslim voices.

The evidence—both in the world and at Foggy Bottom—makes it reasonably clear that the United States is doing little to advance religious freedom in its foreign policy.

It should be doing a lot, for two compelling reasons. First, millions of people are suffering because of violent religious persecution. We should care about that, especially in places like Iraq, where U.S. military action—and our utter failure to advance the cause of religious freedom—has led to the devastation of Iraqi Christian and other minority communities (see the recent speech of Iraqi bishop Shlemon Warduni to the convocation of American Catholic bishops).

Second, the advancement of religious freedom would serve vital American interests. Both history and social science make it clear that highly religious nations like Egypt and Pakistan will not achieve stable democracy unless they embrace religious freedom in full. Nor will they be able to defeat the toxic religious ideas that feed violent Islamist terrorism, including the kind that has reached American shores.

In short, the Obama administration's sidelining of religious liberty—whether to remove obstacles to its LGBT initiative or for any other reason—is terribly shortsighted. America needs a resurgence of religious freedom, both here and abroad. The stakes are too high for this issue to be ignored any longer. ♦

Capitalism's Brave New World

We have seen the future, and it microtasks

By Jonathan V. Last

Tired of journalism's glamour and prestige, I decided to take a second job last week. I went to Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk website—a sort of virtual job fair matching thousands of businesses and online workers—and got a microtasking gig. It didn't take long. I filled out a few forms, proved I was a live, human being with a functional email address, and Amazon put me to work. My first assignment was for an employer called "CrowdSource" and the task was to type a provided search term into Google, click on the first result, and copy that page's URL into my work page.

I have no idea what function this job could possibly serve, except to help someone game, or learn to game, the Google search algorithm. But I wasn't getting paid to think. I was paid to type, click, copy, and paste. I completed eight of these microtasks in less than two minutes. I was paid 16 cents. Or rather, I will be paid 16 cents at some later date—provided that CrowdSource turns out to be a legitimate operation that pays its bills. Which, in the world of microtasking, is not a guarantee.

Welcome to the digital economy.

There is a certain view of economics that regards Amazon's Mechanical Turk as both a utopian scheme and a vision of the future. Free-marketers and libertarians will be awed by the spectacle of an untrammeled labor market: A cavalcade of employers make available a wide variety of work. The jobs and compensation are exhaustively defined. A multitude of laborers examine this menu and decide which jobs appeal to them and whether the compensation is adequate. No one is forced to take a job he doesn't like. No one gets tricked into a job he didn't sign up for. In the world of Amazon's Mechanical Turk, there is no employment discrimination, none of the inefficiency and unfairness produced by credentialing regimes, and no workplace politics. Work is reduced to its purest components and as a result, opportunities for both employers and employees are increased. If you were sketching a graph of social utility, the Mechanical Turk sends a line asymptotically to the ceiling.

The only people who aren't down with the Turk are the kind of bleeding-hearts who think that 16-cent jobs are a violation of human rights and that nonunionized workforces are herds of cattle marching across the grated steel floor of the corporate rendering plant—the complaints typically following the Occupy Wall Street line about serfdom and income inequality.

The hippies are wrong in the particulars. But they still may be on to something. Because while it's true that the new world of anonymous, mass, remote freelancing may be a perfect distillation of a textbook labor market, it's also a radical change in Americans' understanding of the social compact between business and the citizenry. And it's not clear that this change is for the good.

It's worth appreciating the breadth of the change microtasking represents. It breaks up jobs into astonishingly small tasks—a job might take a minute, an hour, or a day. Imagine an assembly line that can be deconstructed and dispersed so that, instead of having to clock in for an eight-hour shift, workers can be paid by the piece. They show up to the line and do as much, or as little, work as they like. Yet because the line is decentralized over a large network of potential employees, it always runs smoothly.

Microtasking also obliterates geography—you can work from a bar in midtown Manhattan, a basement in Montana, or a brothel in Manila. And it wipes out the entire universe of credentials and gatekeeping. Gone are wasted years at Big State and master's degrees in Lesbian Poets of West Africa. The Mechanical Turk makes jobs available to anyone willing to work.

The implications of such a job market are far-reaching. Imagine what instant access to an abundant supply of jobs could do for, say, the rural poor in Alabama. Whereas

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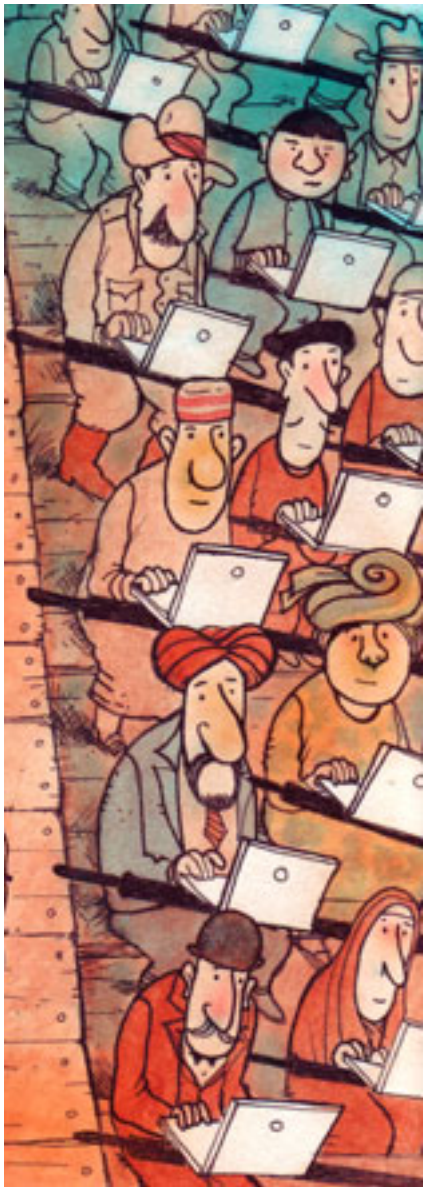
today escape from poverty requires some social skills, some education, and mobility, with the Mechanical Turk it requires only a computer with Internet access.

Flip the telescope around and you can see that it opens up worlds for business, too. Microtasking allows even relatively small businesses to scale a workforce up or down as needed. A startup company in Seattle with 3 employees can hire 1,000 people for an afternoon of work on a big task—at a moment's notice. Then, when the job is done, it can instantly downsize.



From a practical standpoint, there are a couple of open questions about microtasking. The first is how meaningful the jobs it deleverages can be. When you look around the world of microtasking on exchanges like Mechanical Turk, the tasks fall into categories that are fairly Internet-specific: Look up the email address of a business; answer a question about a Twitter user; choose a category for a website; write a headline for a video clip or a review of a product. The jobs these tasks combine to accomplish aren't about any *real* work so much as they're about the Internet itself. Nearly all the companies that employ microtaskers are Internet companies. It's mostly data entry, search-engine optimization, and the like. Which means that it's only value-added by the debased standards of the web. If microtasking really is going to be the future—if the Mechanical Turk is someday going to displace the temp agency and the HR recruiter—then someone will have to break more meaningful jobs down in a way that lends itself to microtasking.

Which leads us to the second question: How big could it get? It's difficult to say, of course. Amazon says that there are 500,000 workers using its system. Write.com, a smaller microtasking site that focuses on mini-writing assignments, says that 20,592 writers have completed 478,046 jobs for employers. (Earning a total of $718,933; or $1.50 a throw.) Elance.com is a more upscale Mechanical Turk. It matches businesses with remote temporary workers who have the skills to handle more demanding tasks such as computer coding or database cleaning. Workers set the price in a kind of reverse auction by posting their hourly rate with their profiles. Elance recently surveyed the businesses it works with and found that 57 percent of them expected that, within five years, more than half of their workforces would be made up of remote, temporary workers from around the world.

It's that last clause that should give us pause.

The Internet is a disruptive technology, but thus far it has disrupted the labor market less than might have been expected. Most companies still employ people who live near them for the simple reason that most jobs require people to be in a particular place, at a particular time, so that they can work together. A company in San Francisco whose business is attracting visitors to a website with funny images of cats might be able to hire a microtasker in Jakarta to assign metatags to cat pictures so that users searching Google for cat images will be more likely to find their way to that company's website. A maker of medical devices in the suburbs of Philadelphia needs people to show up in the office to perform research, design a manufacturing process, orchestrate a supply chain, and plan a marketing and sales campaign. Twenty-five years into the Internet age, this geographical tie between work and workers has proved surprisingly stubborn. And it is precisely this tie which the Mechanical Turk and its brethren seek to destroy.

There are good reasons to welcome the uncoupling of work and geography. For instance, it would produce immediate and sizable gains in economic efficiency. But there are also some reasons to be suspicious because two developments have changed the relationship of business to the American people. The first is the invention of the corporation.

Because they are perpetual and, in a certain sense, unaccountable, modern corporations have a different set of interests than flesh-and-blood people, and a very different relationship with the people's voice—government—than old-fashioned sole proprietorships or partnerships. A business owner is a citizen, with the same mix of interests and

DAVID CLARK

obligations as other citizens. He might serve in the military or run for office. He has political concerns that run the gamut from worrying about local schools and trash pickup to national fights over gay marriage. He is interested in these issues, and how his government responds to them, because he is a citizen, with fellow citizens who look out for him and vice versa. By contrast, the corporation by design has only an interest in its own survival and profitability: It will concern itself with government insofar as it can enlist the government in helping it make money. On every other question, the corporation is, by definition, indifferent.

The other development is the rise of multinational corporations following World War II. As communication, shipping, and jet travel improved, it became practical for large corporations to do business abroad. They built factories in other countries, hired foreign workers, and eventually learned to pit countries against one another in order to get the best deal they could with their taxes and regulations. From there it was just a short step to transnational corporations—business concerns which operate without any true home country. This metamorphosis completed the corporation's evolution to something like a semi-autonomous sovereign: The corporation pursues its own interests, as it understands them, from whatever geographic position (and under whatever legal regime) it finds most accommodating at the moment. It becomes a city-state without land.

None of this is sinister. There is probably no better way to organize large industrial concerns and make them as efficient as possible. Under the traditional arrangements Americans have had with business for the last 200 years, our relationship with corporations has been mutually beneficial. America provides a hospitable environment in which businesses can prosper. As they prosper, businesses create wealth for workers and investors. And the arrangement creates a loop of prosperity as consumption, education, and innovation combine to elevate the lives of all concerned.

At the heart of this loop is a social compact. America provides business with an enormous basket of essential goods. There's the physical capital—roads and sewers. Then there's the human capital—a literate, educated workforce with a reasonably benign cultural disposition. All of which, you could argue, businesses pay for with their taxes. But infinitely more valuable is America's social capital. If you run a business in America you usually don't have to bribe every government official who comes by to inspect your workplace. When you interact with the police, they are likely to help you rather than ask for protection money. If a competitor damages you, there is a legal regime that can be engaged with some modicum of impartiality. Property rights are generally secure and respected. The criminal code is explicit and routinely enforced. Corruption—a deadly poison for economic life—is rare and the political order is stable enough to be disregarded as a cause for concern.

These benefits aren't really paid for by anyone's taxes. They are the legacy of 250 years of American labors, on the battlefields, in the courts, and at the ballot box. They are intangible yet irreplaceable and, literally, priceless.

Americans have loved commerce since the Founding and they give these wondrous gifts to business freely. In return, they have traditionally asked only one thing: that business owners participate in the life of their communities.

A company that builds a factory in San Antonio should employ Americans to staff it and not have Mexican laborers commuting back and forth over the border. This may not always make good business sense—after all, if Mexican labor is cheaper, using it is more efficient. But America's historical compact with business is about bigger things than efficiency, and if a company wants to employ Mexicans it's free to build its factory in Mexico.

Yet it's this geographic link that the remote freelancing revolution threatens to sever. The problem it poses isn't just that American companies will offload low-skill, microwage jobs to Mexico (or India or Vietnam or Cambodia). The rise of remote, freelance microtasking means that the relationship between business and America becomes a one-way street: Americans provide a welcoming social order for business, and business is still welcome to fish in the global labor pool for the cheapest workers.

When you combine these two transformations—business's evolution from the individual to the corporation and its newfound ability to exist in, but not of, the place it physically inhabits—you create an environment where a business is less like a citizen and more like a virtual state. A semi-sovereign. A parasite, the hippies might say.

That's an exaggeration, of course. Commerce is the indispensable engine of American life, and has been since the country's earliest days. (Before the revolution, George Washington created and ran the Patowmack Company, a private venture dedicated to turning the Potomac river into a toll waterway via a series of locks and canals.) And in any case, the liberal critique of microtasking is usually that it somehow isn't "fair" for the Mechanical Turk to pay someone 16 cents to do a job that takes 90 seconds.

But the real concern isn't wages, per se. (There are some services, like Odesk.com, where highly specialized freelancers command as much as $25, $45, even $80 an hour.) It's what happens when labor is, for the

first time in human history, uncoupled from geography.

Perhaps the free market true-believers will be right. Maybe the increased efficiencies will trickle down through the economy and the rising tide will lift all boats. Maybe the tech company in San Francisco that hires microtasking Pakistani temps, instead of local workers, will be able to use the money it saves to create even more value and wealth, which will eventually find its way into the San Franciscan, or at least the American, economy. Maybe, too, the ability to switch employers on an hourly or daily basis will be a type of liberation for workers. Instead of chafing for years under a petty tyrant of a boss, you can quit your job at noon after a thankless morning and start a new job with a different employer after lunch.

Or perhaps it will turn out that the ability for any business to outsource any task, no matter how small, will not just deprive local workers of work, but will drive down local wages even for other forms of work. Maybe the bulk of the economic benefits will be realized abroad and businesses will become ever more mercenary "citizens of the world," which is to say, not citizens at all by any traditional understanding of the concept.

Whether the end result is good or ill, this will not be business as usual—it represents a sea change in the relationship between business and the citizenry, and it is something wholly new to the American experience. And despite the foolish protestations of some on the left, conservatives should greet it with, at most, two cheers.

Conservatives, in America anyway, have long had a natural sympathy for business. But they have also cultivated an appreciation for the unintended consequences of systemic disruptions. This is why conservatives have been wary of epochal social changes, especially those flying the flag of liberation, such as the advent of the birth control pill, the rise of no-fault divorce, and gay marriage. If the geographic linkage between American businesses and the American people is dissolved, it is impossible to predict what will happen next.

The websites for microtaskers Mechanical Turk, Odesk, and Elance note that they serve employers as big as AOL, Google, Citigroup, and Microsoft and as small as the Mom and Pop business next door. Yet when you click through the lists of available workers waiting to serve these businesses, more often than not—far more often, actually—they're from Pakistan or Turkey or India or Serbia, rather than the United States.

Where, coincidentally, the unemployment rate is 8.2 percent, and the real jobless rate is closer to 15 percent. ♦

During a visit to India, Marshal Zhukov demonstrates his version of a 'Red Army bayonet thrust,' 1957.

Brutal Victor

The man who crushed the Wehrmacht. BY ANDREW NAGORSKI

At the entrance to Red Square, a large, striking statue greets visitors. Erected in 1995 in time for the 50th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany, it depicts Marshal Georgy Zhukov on his Arabian horse during the 1945 victory parade—and confirms his status as Russia's national hero. The British historian Geoffrey Roberts is convinced that Zhukov deserves this place of honor, since he was "the best all-around general of the Second World War."

Yet in this meticulously researched new biography, Roberts also points out that Zhukov was "a deeply flawed character of epic achievements . . . neither the unblemished hero of legend nor the unmitigated villain depicted by his detractors." That judicious verdict is right on target. But there are all sorts of problems in writing a new biography of Zhukov, and evaluating his record. Roberts navigates many of them skillfully, while tripping up on others. After all, it's hard to set the record straight about someone who served as Stalin's right hand, helped crush Hitler, and went through alternating periods of lionization and denunciation.

Stalin's General
The Life of Georgy Zhukov
by Geoffrey Roberts
Random House, 400 pp., $30

The first challenge is that of sources. While immensely valuable, Zhukov's famous memoirs—whether in the officially sanctioned version that was first published in 1969, or the numerous revised versions that followed later and included previously censored passages—were (not surprisingly) written to cast the author in the most favorable light and to assure his exalted place in history. They were also often short on the kind of personal details that make for a rich autobiographical portrait, chronicling instead a fairly predictable sequence of events. This makes it difficult for Roberts to avoid following a somewhat similar pattern at times, describ-

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ing the military and political context in detail, but finding it hard to offer a three-dimensional portrait of Zhukov.

As for other military and political leaders who wrote about Zhukov, their portrayals of the man often depended on timing: Were they provided when he was riding high, or when he was abruptly cast aside by Stalin or, later, by Nikita Khrushchev?

Roberts works hard to set the record straight where he can. According to Zhukov's account, for instance, he was born into poverty in 1896, and sent off at age 12 to Moscow as an apprentice furrier, working long days under harsh conditions. But Roberts points out that, while his family was poor and the young Georgy was flogged on more than one occasion, he was "a relatively privileged peasant." The furrier apprenticeship, under the tutelage of an uncle who ran the business, served him well, and he was able to continue his education at night school. Before he was drafted to fight in World War I, he had finished his apprenticeship and was already making a good living.

More significantly, Zhukov, who fought not just in World War I, but also in the civil war following the Bolshevik Revolution, claimed that he narrowly escaped Stalin's purges of the military's top ranks in 1937-38. By that time, Zhukov was already an accomplished officer known for exercising strict discipline. And while he had every reason to keep a packed bag in case he was arrested, as his daughter Ella remembers, Roberts notes that there is no documentary evidence to support his claim that "the necessarily fatal documents were prepared on me," as he put it in an interview in 1971. In reality, Zhukov was like many of his peers who managed to keep their heads down and survive the purges, benefiting from the disappearance of many of their superior officers, which cleared the way for faster promotions of those behind them.

Despite the title of his book, Roberts combines that clear-eyed assessment of Zhukov's position at the height of Stalin's purges of the military with an almost benign characterization of his subject's view of the Soviet tyrant. He describes Zhukov as "both a loyal communist and a devotee, albeit a mild one, of the growing cult of Stalin's personality." Similarly, Roberts downplays the impact and scope of the purges in the military, pointing out that several thousand of the dismissed or imprisoned officers were reinstated later. Compared with Stalin's other purges, he argues, this one was "relatively restrained."

At the very least, both assertions create somewhat misleading impressions. As Robert Conquest pointed out in his seminal study *The Great Terror*, the purges hit senior officers the hardest, including 3 of the 5 marshals, 13 of the 15 army commanders, 50 of the 57 corps commanders, and 154 of the 186 divisional commanders—and this is only a partial list. Khrushchev argued that the purges were one of the reasons why, in June 1941, the Soviet Army was so woefully unprepared for the German invasion: "So many were executed that the high command as well as middle and lower echelons were devastated," he wrote. "As a result our army was deprived of the cadres who had gained experience in the civil war, and we faced a new enemy unprepared."

It's not quite clear why Roberts feels compelled to characterize Zhukov as a "mild" devotee of Stalin, when so much of his book is focused on his service under the Soviet leader. True, once Zhukov rose to his dominant position in the military command during World War II, he appeared to be somewhat less personally intimidated by Stalin than most senior officers. But his loyalty was beyond question. As was his willingness to resort to the kind of brutal methods that were considered *de rigueur* for any faithful disciple.

Zhukov's major break came in May 1939 when he was assigned to the Far East, where Soviet and Japanese troops were fighting intense battles along the Khalkhin-Gol River on the disputed Mongolian-Manchurian border. He improved intelligence-gathering, trained his troops hard, and caught the Japanese unawares with a major new offensive that resulted in a decisive victory in August. In the process, he also demonstrated the kind of ruthlessness that would mark his entire military career. While preparing for the Khalkhin-Gol offensive, he announced the execution of two soldiers for cowardice. And he was quick to proclaim: "Death to the despicable cowards and traitors!"

Under Stalin, those were never idle threats. Both the Soviet dictator and Zhukov did not hesitate to order their troops into battle even when the odds were stacked against them—casualty calculations simply weren't a factor. In some cases, such sacrifices of their men were justified by the results; in others, this approach led to countless squandered lives. And that was on top of those who were killed outright by Soviet firing squads. During World War II, the Soviets executed 170,000 of their own troops. And after German forces scored their initial series of victories on the Eastern Front, Stalin and his generals often would not permit retreats—even for tactical reasons—and set up "blocking battalions" to machine gun anyone who disobeyed.

Roberts mentions such practices but doesn't dwell on them. Instead, he focuses on Zhukov's career as he is at first caught up in the disaster following Hitler's launching of Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. At Stalin's behest, Zhukov issued orders for counter-offensives that were completely unrealistic and ensured staggering losses. But after taking charge of beleaguered Leningrad, he stayed there long enough to arrest the German advance, setting the stage for what would be the 900-day siege of that critical city, and then raced back at Stalin's command to organize the defense of Moscow.

Nearly two million Soviet troops perished in the various stages of the battle for Moscow, and it was as much Hitler's mistakes as Soviet resistance that led to the sputtering-out of the German drive on the capital's outskirts. While this represented the first defeat for the Wehrmacht since its invasion of Poland in September 1939, it wasn't until the Battle of Stalingrad a year later that the Soviet Union could claim a decisive triumph. Zhukov was involved in the planning of that action,

but Roberts points out that he almost certainly exaggerated his role. At the same time, he was directly responsible for the abject failure of Operation Mars, which had been designed to sweep away the remaining threat to Moscow in the Rzhev-Vyazma region.

As Soviet forces recovered from their initial defeats and gained momentum, Zhukov was able to burnish his status as the architect of victory, particularly after his troops finally seized Berlin. His personal triumph was short-lived, however: When Stalin launched a new round of purges in 1946, Zhukov was denounced as "an exceptionally power-loving and self-obsessed person." One of the additional charges against him was that he "expects submissiveness and cannot bear dissent." This may have been accurate, but it also demonstrates that Stalin had no sense of irony.

The other irony in Zhukov's career was that he helped Khrushchev win power by participating in the arrest of Stalin's feared secret police chief Lavrenty Beria after Stalin's death in 1953, and served as defense minister under the leader who launched the de-Stalinization campaign. During Zhukov's tenure, his devotion to brutal repression against perceived foes remained undiminished. When the Hungarians sought to break away from Soviet domination in 1956, he was typically unequivocal in his recipe for action: "Remove the rotten elements. Disarm the counterrevolution. Everything must be brought to order." The resulting bloodshed was hardly surprising.

For all his attempts to sort through Zhukov's record judiciously, Roberts points out that "winning in war tends to trump all criticism of the conduct of particular battles or operations." But where his biography falls short is in examining just how much Stalin, Zhukov, and the others who constituted the political and military leadership of the Soviet Union were responsible for nearly losing the war at first—and for contributing to its astronomical toll. Russian historians estimate approximately 27 million Soviet citizens died during the war, of which at least 8.6 million comprised Soviet military personnel. Stalin's refusal to believe the numerous warnings of his own spies and Western powers that Hitler was about to attack, and the subsequent calamitous series of military decisions in the early days of that conflict, as ordered by Zhukov and other commanders, magnified the tragedy.

For all that, Zhukov deserves his place on his horse in front of the entrance to Red Square. He learned from his early mistakes and eventually led his troops to victory, commanding the respect of Allied generals and leaders who recognized that the Germans suffered their greatest losses at the hands of his forces. Without those losses, Hitler's Germany would have ruled Europe much longer than it did.

But Zhukov's "flawed character," as Roberts puts it, also suggests why the new Russia still has so many difficulties in honestly confronting its recent history. Even in the case of the country's most acclaimed military commander, the Stalinist "flaws" are all too evident, and the price that his countrymen paid for them remains all too high. ♦

B&A

Original Edith

The Sitwell with, arguably, the main claim to genius.

BY EDWARD SHORT

Does a biography bring any psychological insight to the portrayal of its subject? Does it place its subject in the context of his or her contemporaries? Does it have anything of critical substance to say about its subject? Is it well written? Is it entertaining? Is it animated by that sympathetic fellow-feeling without which biography too often is little more than prurient gossip?

Edith Sitwell
Avant Garde Poet, English Genius
by Richard Greene
Virago, 544 pp., $17.50

No literary biography of recent years has met all these exacting criteria with anything close to the same élan as *Edith Sitwell: Avant Garde Poet, English Genius*. And what makes Richard Greene's achievement all the more admirable is that he has found so many new and incisive things to say about a subject that has not been untilled. Victoria Glendinning wrote a life of the famous sister of Sir Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell that is still worth reading. Then again, in her own time, Sitwell had several redoubtable admirers: W.B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf, Siegfried Sassoon, Roy Campbell, and W.H. Auden all praised her work. Yet, in his depiction of the life of this now unjustly neglected figure, Greene has transformed our view of the poet by looking behind her famous eccentricities and showing us the vulnerable, heroic woman who was capable not only of memorable verse but of great kindness, resilience, loyalty, and grace. And, being a poet himself, Greene offers his animadversions on Sitwell's poetry with a certain practical authority.

In his latest collection, *Boxing the Compass*, Greene ends with a poetic travelogue of sorts, which includes these striking lines:

The streets of Georgetown are out of time,
one ancient house of blue granite on M Street
was erected before tea and tax
turned colonies into musket-bearing states—
the oldest are stone and then came brick—
houses built at the edge of pavements,

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fashionable, then slum, now revived as chic.

In his own work of revival, Greene realizes that Sitwell's reputation has suffered in a critical ethos hostile to her mystery-honoring aesthetics. After noting that many now ignore the work Sitwell did after *Façade* (1920), her musical collaboration with William Walton, he makes an incisive point: "That evasion happens because we do not yet have the nerve to say that the generation of Philip Larkin imposed as orthodoxy a painfully narrow, indeed incoherent account of where poetry comes from." And this largely was a result of the baleful influence of logical positivism, which held (as Greene reminds readers) "that knowledge must be strictly empirical, and that metaphysics and theology are meaningless." Now that an edition of Larkin's complete poetry has been published (see "Philip the Great," The Weekly Standard, June 25, 2012), it is a good time to reappraise his achievement in this rarely considered light.

As Greene shows, Sitwell refused to comply with the attenuated poetics exemplified by Larkin, insisting instead on *seeing all glory hidden in small forms / The planetary system in the atom, the great suns / Hid in a speck of dusk*. Indeed, in a poem she wrote in 1942 entitled "From An Old Woman," Sitwell did not hesitate to take on themes that directly contradict the positivists' fashionable nihilism:

For though the soundless wrinkles fall like snow
On many a golden cheek, and creeds grow old
And change,—man's heart, that sun,
Outlives all terrors shaking the old night:
The world's huge fevers burn and shine, turn cold,
Yet the heavenly bodies and young lovers burn and shine,
The golden lovers walk in the holy fields
Where the Abraham-bearded sun, the father of all things
Is shouting of ripeness, and the whole world of dews and splendours are singing
To the cradles of earth, of men, beasts, harvests, swinging
In the peace of God's heart. And I, the primeval clay
That has known earth's grief and harvest's happiness,
Seeing mankind's dark seed-time, come to bless,
Forgive and bless all men like the holy light.

Edith and Osbert Sitwell, ca. 1925

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION / CORBIS

The author of these exultant lines, Edith Louisa Sitwell (1887-1964), was born in Scarborough, the oldest of three children of Sir George Sitwell, fourth baronet, genealogist, and antiquary, and his wife, Lady Ida Emily Augusta Denison, daughter of the first Earl of Londesborough. Edith's eccentricity, not to mention that of her brothers and parents, may have come from the fact that the Sitwell family included among their ancestors not only kings of France and the English Plantagenets, but Robert the Bruce and the Macbeths. With this genealogical cocktail raging in the family's blood, it is no wonder that Sir George became enamored of heraldry and *Burke's Peerage*. Lady Ida, for her part, became so fond of gambling and drinking that she actually landed in prison after involving herself with criminal moneylenders.

Unfortunately, neither parent was very fond of Edith. Her striking looks, which artists as different as C.R.W. Nevinson, Wyndham Lewis, and Cecil Beaton found fascinating, disconcerted them, and they were entirely incapable of entering into her delight in poetry and music. Sitwell was an original, and the utter incomprehension that she inspired in her parents, neither of whom was uncultivated, measured something of the boldness of her originality. Even Virginia Woolf, who liked to imagine her own originality peerless, recognized that Edith was distinctly different: "I do admire her work," she admitted, "& that's what I say of hardly anyone: She has an ear, & not a carpet broom; a satiric vein and some beauty in her."

If Sir Osbert Sitwell's great multi-volume autobiography showcases the obsessional hobbyhorses of the Sitwell patriarch, Richard Greene reveals more of the cruelty that he and his extravagant wife visited upon their neglected firstborn. Fans of the autobiography's high comedy, however, will enjoy Greene's own sense of the ridiculous, which is on display on nearly every page of this deeply funny book. After Osbert stood for his father's Scarborough seat as an Asquithian Liberal—a foray into politics for which he had his sister's full support—Edith remarked apropos the constituency itself:

> What a strange place—partly a clownish bright-coloured tragic hell, partly a flatness where streets crawl sluggishly, and one drop of rain (no more) drops on one's face half way down the street, and there are no inhabitants, or so it seems, but boys so indistinguishable in their worm-white faces that they have to wear coloured caps with initials that one may be known from the other. Osbert didn't "get in." I suppose they found out he was a poet.

Greene's comment on this is characteristically witty: "It can be assumed that on the hustings Edith Sitwell lacked the common touch."

While Greene is sound enough not to overstate the merits of Sitwell's most famous poem, "Still Falls the Rain," which she composed during the Blitz, he does persuasively argue that rhythm is at the heart of the success of most of her best poetry. As Edwin Muir perceptively observed, she was "a cross between Meredith and the Queen of Spades." If there is a careful attention to symbolism in her work, there is also an equally careful appreciation of the uses of the incantatory, which the poet must have had confirmed when she prayed.

In addition to being a shrewd critic both of poetry and the psychology of poets, Greene is a deft chronicler of the historical backdrop against which Sitwell lived. He captures the despondent frivolity that followed the Great War, for example, with laconic precision:

> After an evening of pianola music and dancing, one of the party-goers, on his way home, tried to set fire to Nelson's plinth. Going back to Aldershot, Sachie saw drunken women rolled like milk cans along the platform at Waterloo Station and stowed in the guard's van. The reign of peace began the next morning with a hangover and some bruises.

Greene is also good on the precarious life that Sitwell lived in bohemian penury in Bayswater and Montparnasse with Helen Rootham, a failed fellow artist to whom Sitwell was staunchly loyal and who inspired one of her most eloquent jeremiads: "Invalids, poor things, don't realise how constant their claims on one's time become; they get immersed in a world of their own, and become (through no actual fault of their own) terribly selfish—exerting, quite unconsciously, a kind of moral blackmail." Still, it was the unflagging *caritas* that Sitwell lavished on Helen that prepared her for her eventual conversion to Roman Catholicism.

The terrible thing about Greene's biography is that it reveals the extent to which Osbert not only withheld but actually stole portions of his sister's inheritance, a piece of blackguardly selfishness which only accentuates Edith's own selflessness when it came to caring for and protecting those she loved, including her brothers. Fans of Osbert's autobiography will find these disclosures of malfeasance sad reading.

Despite the unkindness, and indeed abuse, that she suffered at the hands of family and friends, Sitwell was a warmhearted woman whose generosity was of a piece with the celebratory exuberance of her poetry. This quality also comes out in her letters. In one, she recommends that a friend look at Michelangelo's drawings in the Uffizi, which she characterizes as "superb with the kind of proud magnificent beauty that my mother had, more than any woman I've ever seen—staring at her image in old age,—equally beautiful in its own way, but with the immortality of the bone, not with the pride of summer."

If Lady Ida ever paid her daughter's beauty any comparable mind, no record of it survives.

Then, again, Greene vividly captures the sorrow that always threatened to cast out the glee that otherwise animated Sitwell's joyous sense of the richness of life, a sorrow compounded by her long, troubled attachment to the Russian painter Pavel Tchelitchew. "I've been feeling terribly unhappy lately," she admits to one correspondent in the 1930s. "I've seen people behaving in such a dreadful ugly way. . . . And I never can get used to it." By the same token, she was always prepared to take even her gloom and turn it into fodder for her wonderful jokes: "I had such a terrible dream last night," she tells another correspondent; "I dreamt I was in a low shallow grave, that I had to dig with my own nails, and that I couldn't lie down because there were still a few drops of blood left in my heart, and so I wasn't allowed to be dead."

In an entry for the old *Dictionary of National Biography*, John Lehmann nicely summed up Edith Sitwell when he remarked how "her capacity for icy, lightning-swift repartee to bores, who were fatally attracted to her, concealed a great sense of fun and also a deep sense of compassion that could immediately be aroused by a genuine tale of misfortune." This biography is a tribute to both the sense of fun and the sense of compassion of a subject who here lives in all her sardonic gaiety. ♦

B&A

Baptism of Fire

George Washington's adventures as a British officer.

BY MARK TOOLEY

Was young George Washington a slightly inept and self-serving martinet who helped to blunder the British Empire into the otherwise avoidable French and Indian War? Seemingly so, according to this account of Washington's early military adventures.

At age 21, Washington was selected by Virginia's lieutenant governor, Robert Dinwiddie, as leader for a dangerous mission to warn the French against further occupation of the "Ohio Country." It was the first of several crucial leadership roles that Dinwiddie would lavish on the youth, who was young enough to be the royal official's grandson. But given Washington's continued

George Washington's First War
His Early Military Adventures
by David A. Clary
Simon & Schuster, 384 pp., $16

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mishaps and missteps, it's not fully clear why Dinwiddie vested such authority in him.

Washington had no military experience. His major qualification was his familiarity with the Virginia frontier, thanks to his extensive surveying work as a teenager on behalf of Lord Fairfax, the controlling proprietor of what is now Northern Virginia and northeastern West Virginia. Young Washington's extensive social and professional ties with the Fairfax family (their elegant Belvoir estate was near Mount Vernon) gave him the necessary connections to the governor's palace in Williamsburg. (Typically, lieutenant governors such as Dinwiddie lived in the palace and governed the colony, while the official royal governor preferred to receive his salary while remaining in England.) George's older half-brother Lawrence, whose early death would bequeath Mount Vernon to him, was a British naval officer, a role to which George had unsuccessfully aspired.

The first expedition that launched Washington's military career was to the French Fort Le Boeuf, near present-day Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1753. En route through wild country across the Alleghenies, Washington had negotiated tentative alliances with Indian friends, such as Tanacharison (known as Half-King), who would play a crucial role for Washington at the eventual start of the conflict. In Washington's first exposure to the treacheries of diplomacy, the French commander entertained him sumptuously (at least by frontier standards), but also told the young upstart that France would by no means abandon its lands to the British. Once in their cups at the end of a long meal, the French virtually divulged their plans for further fortifications in what is now western Pennsylvania.

After reporting the exchange back in Williamsburg, Washington was ordered by Dinwiddie to lead a military expedition to what is now Pittsburgh to construct a fort. The French beat him to it by building Fort Duquesne, the conquest of which would remain a chief British objective throughout the upcoming war. A small French exploratory party approached the Pennsylvania camp of Washington's command of Virginians and Indian allies, but Washington ambushed the French, who surrendered, after which Half-King apparently tomahawked the French commander, likely to Washington's shock.

So began the French and Indian War, which was the North American chapter of the global Seven Years' War between France and Great Britain. Washington boasted to his brother of his first combat: "I heard the bullets whistle, and believe me, there is something charming in the sound." Published in London, the boast famously prompted George II to reply, "He would not say so, if he had been used to hear many."

Colonel Washington, 1756

Rightly expecting an aggressive reaction from the full French force back at Fort Duquesne, Washington hastily built his own Fort Necessity, unwisely in a sunken meadow. There, the French easily forced his surrender in 1754. Washington's command was permitted to depart with honor, of a sort, with their weapons; but thanks to bad translation by a Dutchman, Washington unknowingly signed a confession of his "assassination" of the French officer slain by Half-King. The disaster was international news, giving Washington, then all of 22 years old, some global notoriety.

After the embarassment of the accidental confession, not to mention the ignoble surrender, Washington's nascent military career should have been stillborn. But then, inexplicably, he gained appointment as adviser to Major General Edward Braddock, dispatched from Britain with the largest European military force ever to invade North America. The target was Fort Duquesne, to which Braddock hacked and slashed a 10-foot-wide highway through the virgin wilderness. (For much of the journey, Washington was on his back in a wagon, or on a cot, or struggling on a saddle padded with pillows, suffering from hemorrhoids, among other crippling maladies.)

On the cusp of gaining his prize, Braddock was trapped by the French and their Indian allies, who easily shot the exposed redcoats in their neat formations from behind their own wooded cover. Hundreds were killed, and Braddock himself died from his wounds—but not before bestowing his bloody sash and pistols on his trusted young Virginian aide. (These relics remain on view at Mount Vernon.) Washington, who had no commission in the British Army, virtually took command of the fleeing British force, which ultimately retreated to Philadelphia, leaving the frontier wide open for French and Indian terror.

Although associated with yet another military disaster, Washington was now entrusted by Dinwiddie with the defense of Virginia's western frontier. Colonel Washington created the Virginia Regiment virtually from scratch. Ostensibly to number a thousand men, it never achieved that size. And despite the obvious crisis—with enemy forces easily penetrating into Virginia (thanks partly to General Braddock's inviting new road)—Virginians were mostly unwilling to enlist.

Washington constructed a phalanx of frontier forts from western Maryland to southwest Virginia, and he visited and supervised each fort, traveling hundreds of miles across near-nonexistent roads where ambush was a constant threat. Yet Clary emphasizes that Washington often used his travels to

manage personal business. Washington also continued to whine about a lack of support from Dinwiddie and just about everyone else. He fussed about his uniform, his title, and his lack of military status as an uncommissioned colonial in the British Army. He also flirted with his best friend's wife, the alluring Sally Fairfax.

Despite his constant complaints, his preoccupation with finances, and his supposed lack of success, Washington gained the trust of the newly dispatched Brigadier John Forbes. Savvier than Braddock, Forbes would lead his army across southern Pennsylvania and on to Fort Duquesne. Washington became a confidant to Forbes, who was more than twice his age; and Forbes, like Braddock, would also be killed, but only after the successful expulsion of the French. Young Washington was central to that campaign. He resigned from the Virginia Regiment at the end of 1758, and did not return to military service until 1775.

Washington's officers, many of whom must have been considerably older, mourned the "loss of such an excellent commander, such a sincere friend, and so affable a companion." David A. Clary, however, faults Washington's "adolescent outlook" for his "tendency to shade the truth and pass responsibility for failure on to others," as well as his "open hostility" towards his seniors, such as Lieutenant Governor Dinwiddie, despite their having elevated him from obscurity. Yet, thanks to his service in the French and Indian War, the 43-year-old Washington would join the Continental Congress in Philadelphia as a revered military veteran, where John Adams nominated him, without opposition, as commander of the new Continental Army.

Given the embarrassments of his military career, as Clary tells it, it's not entirely clear why. Despite his obvious yearning for the appointment, Washington told Congress, in his acceptance speech, "I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with." Clary maintains that, in 1775, there was an "echo of the boy colonel of the 1750s, obsessed with personal honor and trying in advance to avoid blame for whatever might go wrong." He entered the Revolutionary War "as a man, and emerged from it a great man," knowing that if he truly wanted honor, this time "he must earn it. And so he did."

Fair enough. But the tall, red-headed youth who, two decades before, had gained the trust of powerful men three times his age for expansive and dangerous missions that helped achieve the British conquest of North America was, perhaps already, something of a "great man." In its determination to minimize the young man in contrast with the mature general, *George Washington's First War* fails to understand the continuity of Washington's character. ♦

B&A

Flood Zones

A market solution to the challenge of water supply.

BY G. TRACY MEHAN III

No observer can ignore the news reports of searing drought in Texas, the competition for limited supplies of water among the booming cities of the Colorado River basin, or even the recurrent conflicts among Georgia, Florida, and Alabama, which rise and fall in intensity and duration almost in tandem with the rate of precipitation and the water level of Lake Lanier, a major source of supply for Atlanta.

The End of Abundance
Economic Solutions to Water Scarcity
by David Zetland
Aguanomics Press, 294 pp., $20

These controversies are purely political and legal battles, without any solid economic thinking or policy being brought to bear in a way which would limit acrimony and allocate water fairly and efficiently while satisfying the needs of both human beings and the environment. Part of the problem is that many (if not most) economists write for each other—using a language foreign to almost everyone else, including those for whom economic thinking would be of tremendous benefit in the management of our water resources: engineers and politicians.

So here is a succinct, articulate book from a newly minted Ph.D. who explains the beneficial role of economics in encouraging wise stewardship and social harmony in water and wastewater supply and provision. David Zetland believes the nub of the matter is that water is priced, at best, based on the cost of delivery, without regard to scarcity. Water and wastewater systems are natural monopolies and, in the United States at least, primarily a government-run business. Politics, not markets, drives the price of the commodity delivered or the service rendered.

Indeed, elected officials tend to avoid robust pricing, fearing voter backlash and allowing for overconsumption, or even backsliding, in terms of maintenance. (The managers of the system serving the nation's capital are trying to implement pipe replacements on a 100-year schedule, which would be an improvement over the 300-year cycle that is presently the norm.) And Zetland may be understating the problem since many, if not most, water and wastewater systems are not even achieving full-cost pricing—

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which would cover debt, operations, maintenance, and long-term capital replacement. Many systems are used as cash cows to support more labor-intensive functions of local government, such as fire and police.

Getting the prices right, for the cost of delivery as well as the scarcity value, can solve both infrastructure and supply problems. Take the case of Santa Barbara, California. In the early 1990s, after several years of drought, Santa Barbara saw its reservoir shrink. Limits on lawn watering and car washing were imposed. Then the water agency instituted steep, increasing block rates resulting in prices *200 percent higher* at the upper rates of water usage. "The impact on changes in behavior and aggressive price penalties was fast and significant. . . . Median monthly consumption dropped from 25 to 17 [cubic meters] per month," writes Zetland. And the consumption levels stayed low: "After the drought ended and prices were lowered, consumption was still only 60 percent of pre-drought levels."

There are also long-term savings to ratepayers which Zetland does not dwell on, but which are real nonetheless. Using less water means using fewer chemicals and less energy. It also results in less capital investment over time, since less capacity is required. As readers of Marc Reisner's *Cadillac Desert* (1986) will appreciate, government subsidies, without requirement of any payback by end-users, result in countless water projects which do not withstand any serious benefit-cost analysis, and can produce needless environmental harm. By relieving users of the incentive to conserve or manage their water use, such subsidies encourage overconsumption usually by the most effective rent-seekers who know how to work the political process.

The dirty little secret of our water "crisis" is that many of our water shortages derive from what Zetland aptly terms "lifestyle water," such as the "Scottish lawn" in Southern California, accounting for more than 50 percent of residential water consumption in the area. This is in addition to the water used for swimming pools, golf courses, and water parks. "The economics of lifestyle water are simple," he argues. "We use the water for fun, so we should have to pay the full cost of that fun, including the cost of scarcity." There is nothing wrong with green lawns, pools, and golf: You should just pay for these amenities. And if residents of Phoenix must flood—yes, flood—their lawns for aesthetic reasons, they should pay for the privilege. "Don't blame the consumer who over-uses cheap water. Blame the monopoly water provider that sets a low price," writes Zetland.

Developing water markets, in combination with scarcity pricing, or even in the absence of such pricing, would be a big step toward effective stewardship of scarce water resources. Zetland notes that golf uses 1 percent of California's water and generates $7 billion in economic activity. Farmers use 75 percent of the state's water to generate $32 billion in economic activity. Every liter of water used in golf generates 16 times the economic output of a liter used in farming.

Of course, farmers will not, and should not, abandon their vocation altogether in order to let people chase a little white ball across the landscape. But farmers could be induced to increase efficiency if there were a market for selling their water savings to golf-course managers. They might switch to higher value, less water-intensive, crops—or install more efficient irrigation. "Water markets would probably reduce water consumption in golf courses, but they would reduce agricultural consumption even more," claims Zetland. Why?

> The value of the output per unit of water at a golf course is greater than the value of output per unit of water at a farm, which makes it easier to pay more for water that's going to be used on the putting green.

Thus, our water problems are no cause for pessimism if we get the prices right and open up markets—even reasonably regulated markets—to allow for adaptation to the new realities of demand and a growing, prosperous population. *The End of Abundance* makes a case for the elegance, simplicity, and equity of pricing and markets in addressing our current challenges. ♦

B&A

No Props to Give

American rhetoric in black and white.

BY JOE QUEENAN

Recently, as I was putting the finishing touches on a story, an editor suggested that I "give props" to the people I was writing about. The idea came from a superior who felt that I should also give a "shout-out" to the subjects of my essay. It was a suggestion which my editor, after considerable reflection, said he was "down with."

All of the people involved in this conversation were middle-aged white people. To a young African American, or in fact to any young person, it must have sounded like Tuareg spies trying to pass as good ol' boys by using expressions like "Shut your pie hole there, feller, or we'll lock you up in the hoosegow."

Let me be perfectly clear about one thing: I personally have no trouble manning up and steppin' out and even on occasion getting jiggy with it; but I am constitutionally incapable of giving props. I would rather have my head chopped off than give props. Just as I cannot and will not tweet, wear a gelled, spiky hairdo that makes me look like somebody worked me

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of Closing Time: A Memoir.

over with a weed-whacker, or refer to my well-appointed suburban colonial house as my "crib," I cannot envision any scenario in which I would ever give props.

Sixty-one years old, a Caucasian in good standing since the Truman administration, and never what you would call a downtown hipster, I am not the sort of person who would ever feel comfortable giving props or receiving props or soliciting props or thumbing my nose at props or lambasting props or excoriating props or waxing poetic about props or bitterly complaining that I had not received my long-overdue props.

I can, to be sure, show respect, hand out accolades, give credit where credit is due, award kudos, single out others for praise, give a little doff of my hat, and even express grudging admiration for someone I do not like but nonetheless admire. But there is no way on earth that I could ever find myself in a situation where I would consciously, voluntarily give props. If I started using expressions like "Let's give props to . . ." or "Here's a shout out to . . ." my wife would get the police to jail the impostor and start dragging the lake for her real husband's body. Either that or she would think I was trippin'.

Back where I come from—North Philadelphia—white guys neither give props nor use expressions like "giving props." Just as Detroit street kids are incapable of using expressions like "You've taken the queen's shilling," or "Aye, now there's a hale fellow well met," in a culturally plausible fashion, I would never feel comfortable giving props to anyone or anything, in any time or any place. Guys like me do not "get ghost," we do not engage in "frontin'," and we are not "down" with anything or anybody. We do not "chill," and we most certainly do not "keep it real."

We just don't have the chops for that kind of stuff. But it's not just because we are old and lame and Irish-American and almost actionably *unkewl*—though that is certainly a factor here. And it's not because we are haters. It's because we belong to that dwindling class of people who are pathologically afraid of doing something culturally, professionally, genetically, or chronologically preposterous. We do not want to sound like the fortysomething bozos on *Jim Rome Is Burning* who bandy about hip-hop slang that is already 10 years out of date, and honestly believe that this makes them sound cutting-edge. We do not want to look and sound like fools.

But there is also the issue of respect. I admire expressions like "giving props." I wish my own ethnic group could come up with pithy expressions like that. We used to, but those days are long gone. The best we can do now is to manufacture inanities like "Awesome, dude!" and "Good job, Skyler!" Still, we recognize verbal facility when we hear it. And pasty-faced curmudgeons like me show our respect to those who have the moral authority to give props by keeping our grubby little hands off their bitchin' expressions.

Let me be perfectly clear about one thing: I personally have no trouble manning up and steppin' out and even on occasion getting jiggy with it; but I am constitutionally incapable of giving props. I would rather have my head chopped off than give props.

We expect our counterparts to do the same. I would hate it if I turned on the television and saw Lil Wayne using expressions like "Have a good one!" and "Just another day in paradise," and "Don't sweat the small stuff," and all the other morbidly chummy Parrothead banalities that make up the dismal patois of modern office life. Richard Pryor, at the dawn of his career, used to do a routine about speech patterns getting dramatically altered after goofy white boys started playing basketball with black kids. After a week, the white kids would be talking like Reverend Ike while the black kids would be saying things like "Aw, shucks!" and "Gee willikers!" and "Wasn't that a dilly?"

At least half of the Pryor Doomsday Scenario has come to pass. In today's world, young white people barge in and annex black people's expressions all the time. This is sometimes done in an affectionately ironic way—"I'm down with that, mofo!" or "True dat"—because white boys never entirely forget where they pilfered these expressions from. But when middle-aged white people start tossing around these phrases, when the yammering nitwits on sports talk shows start doing it, it's just sad.

Kobe Bryant is not going to think Fred Steinhunker is cool just because Steinhunker gave him props. This stuff doesn't make white people any more likable, and it doesn't give them street cred. Black people know how white people operate: First they are mystified by an expression, then they start to employ it in a semi-parodic way, then they annex it, and ultimately they suck the life out of it. By the time middle-class white people get around to saying "word up" and "chill out," those once-evocative turns of phrase are ready for the morgue.

I myself give props to those who have the authority to both give and receive props by never, ever letting the words "give props" pass through my lips. A middle-aged white man who uses the expression "give props" or "I'm down with that" needs to be taken out to the alley and worked over with a two-by-four.

For best results, his assailants should open a can of whup-ass. A big can. I'm not being a hater or anything, but those are asses that need whuppin'. ♦

B&A

Obsessive Compulsive

Stories of the macabre, the unnatural, and the deeply eccentric. **BY THOMAS JOHNSON**

Omicron Ceti III
Stories
by Thomas P. Balázs
Aqueous Books, 258 pp., $14

Our author, professor of creative writing at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, is apparently a huge nerd, and the title of his first short story collection allows the science fiction-savvy reader to discern this fact upfront. Omicron Ceti III is the name of the planet featured in the *Star Trek* episode entitled "This Side of Paradise," and separate quotations from the episode act as epigraphs to the three sections that make up this collection of nine stories.

As the first-person narrator in the titular story tells the reader, in this particular *Star Trek* episode:

> Spock goes down to Omicron Ceti III and gets sprayed by these poppy plants and spends half the show frolicking around with a young Jill Ireland. . . . It's a beautiful thing because Spock is normally so reserved. But then the poppies wear off, and he goes back to being regular old Mr. Spock, the one who can't feel emotion. . . . [H]e says, "I am what I am . . . and, if there are self-made purgatories, we must all live in them."

The idea of the universality of "self-made purgatories" gives this collection thematic coherence. Thomas Balázs displays a deep appreciation for both sexual and intellectual obsession, for how a person's private life of fantasy and fandom can imbue his surroundings with a thrillingly individual significance while also leaving him depressed and isolated. Such is the case for the closeted narrator of "My Secret War," who begins to covertly harass his English professor, rumored to be a former FBI agent, once he becomes aware of the latter's homosexual dalliances. The narrator begins to construe his professor's pedagogical "protocol" as evidence: "*Protocol*. Just the kind of word I expected from a pervert posing as an FBI agent posing as an English teacher."

Balázs's greatest strength as a writer is his ability to highlight the humorous aspects of his narrators' obsessions—be it that of the gourmand for unique dishes, the Victorianist for *Middlemarch*, or a bald salesman for his new hairpiece—while still portraying eccentrics with compassion.

The best example of this double-pronged technique is his depiction of Erik Aaronson, an emotionally stunted Trekkie. Erik's tendency to describe his life in terms specific to the *Star Trek* universe is hilarious. When one of his many partners critiques his stoicism by "compar[ing] me to Data, the android from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*," Erik resents the remark because he hates the spinoff: "Data is a pale imitation of Spock. . . . I told her as much while she was walking out the door." The irrelevance of Erik's fanboy nitpick to the dilemma at hand causes the reader to laugh, while his offhand mention of his girlfriend's departure stirs in the audience that regret which Erik is unable to express himself.

To regard Erik and his fellow narrators with condescending pity, however, would be to overlook the author's underlying suggestion that everyone is involved in behaviors that, from the perspective of third parties, seem laughable. Erik's psychiatrist raves that the car crash that killed his patient's mother is a "classic" example of a "reverse Oedipus"—his fervor for uncovering "erotic attachment" more than equal to Erik's love of *Trek*. The Victorianist narrator of "April Paris" pursues "a hopelessly complex and already out-of-date intellectual project," but the paper written by his more mainstream colleague on how *Sesame Street* has "been co-opted by the right with its false optimism" seems the product of a different brand of academic lunacy. In "The Gourmand," the eponymous narrator is rebuked by a college classmate who discovers his culinary habits: "I would have been understanding if we had ended up in a gay bar. . . . But this is just weird." By the end of the story, this detractor has become a dominatrix.

Despite its emphasis on the ubiquity of quirkiness, Balázs's collection sometimes comes up short in its attempts to portray eccentric relationships. While Erik's romance with a fellow mental patient is endearing, the gourmand's intimacy with a fellow foodie is unconvincing, largely because such poignant emotion seems false in a story otherwise defined by an exaggeratedly macabre tone. Also, Balázs sometimes strains linguistically in trying to affirm pathos, resulting in showy metaphors such as, "I was caught between the Scylla of shame and Charybdis of lust . . . [but] had a talisman . . . [in] the sweet guiltless pleasure of cannabis." The opening story about an adolescent girl's first menstrual period is too brief to serve as anything other than fulfillment of an arbitrary diversity quota, which is hardly necessary given the inherent diversity in this collection, an enjoyably sardonic celebration of the bizarre. ♦

CAROLYN DRAKE

Thomas Johnson is a writer in Baltimore.

"Mitt Romney said Wednesday that a mandate in President Obama's signature health-care law is 'a tax,' contradicting a position his campaign staked out this week and belatedly getting in line with many other Republican leaders."

—Washington Post, *July 4, 2012*

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Romney adviser insists election 'not about economy'

NO REFERENDUM ON OBAMA, EITHER

GOP contender rumored to disagree slightly

BY KAREN TUMULTY

JOADL

Eric Fehrnstrom waves after arriving at his new campaign post.

WOLFEBORO, N.H. — Adding to conservatives' anxieties about the focus of the Romney campaign, top Romney strategist Eric Fehrnstrom announced on 'Meet the Press' that the November election should not be about the economy. "There's been a lot of talk about jobs, the deficit, even GDP growth," he told host David Gregory. "But Governor Romney wants to be very clear that this election is about none of these things. And it certainly isn't about the Affordable Care Act, whose individual mandate the Supreme Court incorrectly called a tax. For if it were a tax, that would be one hell of a tax hike affecting a whole lot of hardworking Americans!"

According to Fehrnstrom, Governor Romney will not be asking voters if they are better off now than they were four years ago. The presidential candidate will also avoid discussing the Middle East, which Fehrnstrom described as "unpredictable and not the ideal time to take decisive action." Asked what the Romney campaign will be focusing on, the strategist said, "It will probably come down to the first ladies' cookie competition sponsored by 'Family Circle.' I just love that magazine."

Governor Romney's campaign schedule has also been revamped. The candidate will be spending less time in Florida, Ohio, and Virginia, and more time in New York, California, Illinois, and Vermont.

In California, Fehrnstrom has scheduled a meeting between Romney and Hollywood executives to discuss gay marriage. In New York City, the candidate will hold a rally in Zuccotti Park. "If things go well," said Fehrnstrom, "we might even do a little door-to-door campaigning in the District of Columbia—I'm sure it will bring back fond memories of Mitt's time in France as a Mormon missionary." When reached for comment, Governor Romney said Fehrnstrom misspoke. "Actually, it's Eric who is being reassigned to French Equatorial

BON VOYAGE CONTINUED ON A6

Anderson Cooper's stunning news

'I do not dye my hair.'

the weekly Standard

JULY 16, 2012