Welcome to the Religion and Culture Web Forum's public discussion board for September 2007. In this thread you will find the invited responses from Joseph Bottum, Richard Garnett, and Thomas Zebrowski.

To leave your own response to Lew Daly's essay or to another posting, choose "post reply." In order to submit a comment, you must register with a personal user ID and password.

Debra Erickson  
Editor, Religion and Culture Web Forum

Anonymous  

It echoes oddly, in Catholic ears, when Lew Daly cites "Oliver Wendell Holmes' stinging two-paragraph dissent" to the 1905 Lochner decision as the beginning of "a progressive legal theory" that would culminate in Franklin Roosevelt’s presidency: a New Deal that Daly believes was very, very Catholic. Holmes was, after all, the quite un-Catholic justice who upheld compulsory sterilization laws in the 1927 case Buck v. Bell, in which he famously concluded that “three generations of imbeciles are enough.”

As it happens, Holmes in 1927 would not have thought his progressive-economics opinion in Lochner contradicted his progressive-eugenics opinion in Buck v. Bell—for he uses the same kind of reasoning in both: the common good, expressed by the natural outcome of a dominant opinion, overcoming what had been perceived as a private right. “We
have seen more than once that the public welfare may call upon the best citizens for their lives,” he explained. “It would be strange if it could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the State for these lesser sacrifices, often not felt to be such by those concerned, in order to prevent our being swamped with incompetence. It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind.”

The fact that progressive legal theory could produce both these results looks, on its face, like grounds for suspicion of progressive legal theory. But Lew Daly presents only the one side of the movements he admires—the side that fits well with what he considers Catholic thought. So, for instance, he places John A. Ryan at the center of the New Deal and insists that Franklin Roosevelt’s economic reforms would not have come into being “without the transcendental moral perspective of Catholic teaching.” But this is to mistake the existence of some parallels for a proof of causation. Was Ryan really more central to the New Deal than William O. Douglas? Or Eleanor Roosevelt? Or Henry Wallace? There’s a whole other way of reading American political history, which sees in Msgr. Ryan a useful dupe, a key figurehead cynically used by Franklin Roosevelt to help build the coalition of blue-collar Catholics, northeast radicals, and racist Southern populists that served the Democratic party so well between 1932 and 1995 (a six-decade run during which the Democrats’ control of Congress was interrupted only briefly).

In fact, it’s better history to see Catholics in the progressive Roosevelt coalition as a check on the natural and logical impulses of progressivism. Certainly, that’s how the party itself came to see them. When the McGovern Commission decided in the early 1970s that the big-city machines and labor unions were no longer necessary for victory, the Democratic Party was essentially announcing its unwillingness to hear anything working-class Catholics had to say—and over the next twenty years the Democrats became entirely the party of abortion (at which point they lost control of Congress).

That wasn’t an aberration. It was, instead, the end of an aberration: the Catholic alliance with American political progressivism. The reason for Catholic participation in progressive causes is, in Daly’s view, entirely financial. That ignores what—given his economic views—he ought to characterize as the heroic decision of ordinary, working-class people to set aside their own monetary interests and vote for the party that will now put pro-life justices on the Supreme Court.

But, then, Daly’s economic views are incorrect. He remembers the murderous anti-life agenda of social change that came to the fore in the 1970s. But he seems to forget the economic disaster that accompanied it. When Daly describes Republicans since Reagan as “stalling and, in some respects, rolling back the legislative progress set in motion in the 1930s,” he seems to imply that we should find more Americans living in worse poverty today than there were when the
New Deal finished—a claim monumentally false. But think just back to the 1970s: Are there in fact more Americans living in worse poverty today than there were when Jimmy Carter was president?

Of course not. The Great Society extensions of the New Deal created new species of poverty—look at the destruction of the family driven by Aid to Families with Dependent Children—and the Reagan-era reforms were right to try to dismantle them. What the Reaganites believed was that a healthy economy can bring about new sources of finance—an economic truth that the riches of one person does not necessarily mean the poverty of another, but, in fact, the creation of new wealth can benefit the whole of society and advance the common good. Centesimus Annus recognizes this truth, and yet, at the same time, it rests on the foundation of the great Leonine teachings that Lew Daly cites as the basis of modern Catholic social teaching.

Lord knows, the Reaganites and their successors didn’t do everything right. But the progressive worldview Daly presents as the only just and moral alternative is what gave us Buck v. Bell, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and Roe v. Wade. And to all of those, Catholics have to say: good riddance.

Joseph Bottum is the editor of First Things.

Lew Daly argues that a religious rather than secular conception of the common good was central to the success of New Deal political liberalism and needs to be recuperated as a moral ideal if we are to accomplish significant and positive political changes today. More controversially, Daly maintains that the moral conception underlying mid-century liberalism’s commitment to a politics of the common good was indebted to Roman Catholic social thought more than to any other religious teaching or philosophy. Daly’s historical thesis serves a partisan objective with contemporary relevance. Because the economic and social program of the American political left finds its most profound grounding in a religious conception of the common good – whereas the right’s agenda is determined by a “political convergence of corporate power and religious backlash” – contrary to what you have heard from shrewd propagandists, a revitalized American liberalism can justly claim to be the rightful occupier of the moral and religious “high ground.”

Daly’s essay holds interest for the abundance of historical material it contains, notably its presentation of the life and work of Fr. John Ryan, a figure one may not have heard much about before but whose thought, if Daly is correct, serves as a kind of touchstone of New Deal political philosophy. At the same time, in its account of American political history Daly’s analysis is at its most contentious. I will try to
avoid getting pulled into these controversies – important though they are – by concentrating instead on the essay’s core moral and religious claims. As a result, my comment on the piece will be mostly about Daly’s appropriation of Catholic thought.

It came as a surprise to me, after observing Daly’s professed initial concern for a more than usually accurate understanding of “the common good,” that he nowhere defines the term for himself. Although he quotes Suarez approvingly on the civil common welfare and makes reference to some moral propositions advanced by other Catholic thinkers that have manifest relevance to politics and legislation, this essay truly is “in search of the common good.” Consequently, my first task is to analyze Daly’s statements with a view towards reconstructing, as far as one can, his meaning of the phrase “a religious theory of the common good.”

After a careful reading of the text, I propose the following about what Daly supposes this particular conception of the common good is. According to Catholic social thought and mainstream New Deal liberalism, the common good is the fundamental moral aim of the whole political community and founds, rather than standing in opposition to, other legitimate moral and civil purposes such as justice, rights, and equality. This conception of politics is called “communitarian” (again, Daly does not define the term) probably because it focuses on a moral end that the political community as such seeks to bring about - rather than just those social conditions that will enable individuals to pursue whatever they take to be their own moral purposes. The common good is addressed to the well-being of all the citizens without distinction, each of whom is understood as a human person with a designate set of natural ends at least partially constitutive of his or her flourishing. Because political authority should serve the basic needs and natural moral aspirations of individual persons via the common good, state intervention in economic affairs is morally justified wherever this is necessary for these legitimate purposes. Because of the moral support it might offer to the welfare state, this last consideration is evidently very close to Daly’s heart.

Daly also says that the common good of New Deal political philosophy, like that of Catholic social thought, is based on faith. Indeed, not just faith in America and its power to do good but religious faith. But what does this mean? Although Daly does not tell us expressly what he means by the “religious,” I can point to two senses in which the essay applies the modifier to this understanding of the common good. In the first instance, it is religious because it is based on a “transcendental moral perspective,” which may refer to Aquinas’ idea that the natural ends of human beings give expression to God’s eternal purposes for human persons and towards which he directs them individually and communally by means of the “natural law.” Yet in referring to “a religious theory of the common good,” doesn’t Daly intend to say more than that it depends upon theistic belief? Yes, it also seems to refer to its association with a particular religion – Christianity. The idea of the
common good, Daly says, was developed in the context of medieval and modern Catholic thought and puts into political practice Jesus’ moral teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, particularly its requirement of responsibility for the well-being of the neighbor.

I may already be suspected of having generously over-interpreted the essay. Even as stated, however, this account of a religious conception of the common good leaves unaddressed several questions to which, given Daly’s thesis, one would like to know the answer. What exactly is the nature of the relationship between Christianity and the common good? In the course of distinguishing Franklin Roosevelt’s liberal conception of the common good from Herbert Hoover’s, Daly quotes FDR’s “fiery” proclamation that “democracy cannot live without that true religion which gives a nation a sense of justice and of moral purpose.” What is Daly’s guess about the identity of this “true religion”? Is it the Christian religion, and if so does it imply that the social predominance of Christianity is necessary for adequately establishing democracy, justice, and a shared moral purpose in line with the common good? Having an answer to that question might also help us to get more out of Daly’s final conclusion that a “secular version of the common good . . . will not guide us from chaos to community.” Why not? What does “religion” add to our understanding of the common good that uniquely facilitates moral and political order? Or is Daly’s practical conclusion here more like a prudential judgment based on the contingencies of American religious opinion? Daly offers some hints but no clear answers to these queries.

There is also some evidence that Daly may not have come to terms with the Catholic conception of the common good in its fullness, appreciating it more for its moral than its social scientific purposes. Daly says that the common good is “a unifying standard . . . of common welfare” and not “a unifying force.” I cannot imagine that Thomas Aquinas, at least – whom Daly singles out as an important source of opinion on these matters – ever referred to the common good as a “force,” but he certainly thought of it as an organizational principle of political unity. The moral imperative to pursue the common good of the political community arises out of human society’s natural and reasonable need to coordinate all the activities of individuals and groups within it around the common objective of temporal happiness. This is explained with extraordinary laconicism in the first chapter of Aquinas’ treatise On Kingship. The common good is thus both a moral standard by which the community’s actions may be judged and an explanation of what a political community is in terms of its end.

But the more serious lacuna in Daly’s account of Catholic social thought pertains to its understanding of the common good’s relationship to religion. Daly discusses Leo XIII and Pius XI, two popes totally identified with the modern Thomistic revival and Catholic social thought. He does not explain that, following Aquinas, these popes thought of religion as a virtue by means of which individuals and societies render unto God what in justice is due to Him as the creator and redeemer of
Religion is preeminently important to individuals and communities because it directs all of their actions towards a final good (God) that incorporates and redeems every other good they pursue. Religion thus supplies the ultimate moral reason why anyone ought to seek to promote even temporal objectives, among which the common good of the political community is the most comprehensive. This religious doctrine of the common good is stated with particular clarity and force in the encyclical of Pius XI that Daly calls "arguably the most radical . . . church-wide statement in all of Catholic history."

"But it is only the moral law which, just as it commands us to seek our supreme and last end in the whole scheme of our activity, so likewise commands us to seek directly in each kind of activity those purposes which we know that nature, or rather God the Author of nature, established for that kind of action, and in orderly relationship to subordinate such immediate purposes to our supreme and last end. If we faithfully observe this law, then it will follow that the particular purposes, both individual and social, that are sought in the economic field will fall in their proper place in the universal order of purposes, and We, in ascending through them, as it were by steps, shall attain the final end of all things, that is God, to Himself and to us, the supreme and inexhaustible Good" [43].

This paragraph of Quadragesimo Anno is certainly "radical," but more in the original sense of the term than Daly's sense of being politically left-wing. Pius XI goes to the religious root or foundation of a particular moral conception of the political order in Catholic theology. The ultimate reason why the popes have an interest in politics and even economics, Pius said, is because they have an interest in and responsibility for the salvation of souls. These popes may therefore have more in common than Daly realizes with those Protestant "pietists" whom he describes as pursuing "social reform as a method of saving souls," in the course of distinguishing them from "liturgicals" (including Catholics).

Understood in its full theological context, the relationship between religion and the common good in the public philosophy proposed by these popes has several other relevant features Daly declined to mention. First, the political community's adequate attainment of its own common good depends upon its public affirmation of the truth of Christianity, they said, because the Christian religion uniquely supplies humans with necessary information about the available means to God in Christ through the ministry of the Church. Only by means of this knowledge and the restorative and supernatural grace sacramentally applied to individuals by the Church can the political community successfully attain even its natural end and be directed there from to the supernatural end. Second, Leo XIII and Pius XI never relented from insisting that the public philosophy of a good political community would include an affirmation of the Roman Catholic Church as the one true Church, in particular because the ministry of Peter and his successors guaranteed to the public square a definitive teaching on matters of faith and morals that have political relevance. Although muted or even
set aside in more recent papal teaching, it is important to remember that these architects of modern Catholic social thought did not retreat from the claim that Roman popes had a God-given right not only to be heard but to be heeded in matters of moral principle by those invested with political authority. What is the relevance of these religious aspects of the Leonine and Pian doctrines of the political common good for Daly's thesis that the New Deal conception of the common good likewise was religious and in a Catholic sense?

The more Catholic social thought of that earlier era is stated with clarity and completeness, the less plausible seems Daly's historical assertion that the religious theory of the common good endorsed by those most responsible for New Deal liberalism was derived from it. Naturally, this does not mean that Catholic social thought could not be brought to bear in support of specific New Deal policies, and Daly is likely right to point out what was the predominance of educated Catholic opinion in this country in favor of FDR's domestic program. Yet even John Courtney Murray, who was apt to present the moral foundations of the political community in a way that suggested their possible separation from specifically Catholic teaching, acknowledged in essays of the period that theistic natural law ethics was no longer the operative public philosophy of American democracy. At a minimum, to be more persuasive, Daly would have to identify which aspects of the Catholic religious theory of the common good were and which were not taken up and by whom on the American political left at the time.

**rgarnett**

*Posted: 18 Sep 2007 21:38   Post subject: Rick Garnett's reply to Lew Daly*

I appreciate the invitation to read, reflect upon, and (belatedly) respond to Lew Daly’s thoughtful and provocative essay, “In Search of the Common Good: The Catholic Roots of American Liberalism.” I understand Daly to be endorsing Michael Tomasky’s claim that (quoting Daly) the “Democratic Party should restore the idea of the common good to its proper place at the core of the party’s political identity.” What’s more, Daly proposes that “it was Catholicism, an embattled minority faith with a long history of passive neglect on social problems, which emerged as the major religious voice and supplied the moral design of the new deal ascendancy.” That is, Catholic social teaching supplied – and could supply again? – the Democratic Party with a politically (and electorally?) powerful “religious theory of the common good.”

Now, because I am coming late to this discussion, and because Joseph Bottum and Thomas Zebrowski have already shared such helpful insights, my own response will be brief.

First, it is worth noting that party of Daly’s story – i.e., the story of Fr. John Ryan’s engagement with the “social question” and the extent to which his work shaped not only the content of, but also the political coalition supporting, the New Deal – is also told well in John McGreevy’s
wonderful book, “Catholicism and American Freedom: A History” (2004). Although McGreevy – like Daly -- explores in detail the connection between Ryan’s exposition of Catholic social teaching and New Deal policies, he is also attentive to a deep divide that weakened the foundations of the Catholic-Progressive coalition, even as President Roosevelt was delighting Fr. Ryan by quoting [i]Quadragesimo Anno [/i]in speeches: As McGreevy explains, even as Progressives were cheering Catholic teachings on labor relations and the economic order, they resisted, and even recoiled from, the Church’s teachings on marriage, family, euthanasia, and sexuality -- teachings that, for Catholics, spoke no less to the "common good" than teachings on workers’ dignity. Even as Progressives were delighted to partner with Catholics in achieving striking electoral and policy victories, they were fretting about (and often working against) what they saw as the reactionary, anti-democratic nature of Catholic university and primary education.

All this is just to suggest that it was not the social upheavals and political shifts of the 1960s that compromised the Catholic-Progressive alliance. Instead, as Joseph Bottum’s post suggests, the divide was real, and deep, from the outset, notwithstanding a consonance of socio-economic visions.

Second, it strikes me that, before the Catholic “religious theory of the common good” can serve (again?) as the core of the Democratic Party’s identity, that theory needs to be fleshed out a bit more. What, exactly, are we talking about when we invoke “the common good”? After all, in some quarters (though not, to be sure, in Daly’s piece), the term is deployed as much for its gauzy connotations and evocative pull as for its content. To invoke the common good is, sometimes, to do little more than send a less-than-subtle announcement that, whatever the day’s dispute, “I’m on the side of the angels; I’m not selfish, I’m for ‘the common good.’”

Now, in [i]Gaudium et spes[/i], we read that the “common good embraces the sum of those conditions of social life by which individuals, families, and groups can achieve their own fulfillment in a relatively thorough and ready way.” It “chiefly consists in the protection of the rights, and in the performance of the duties, of the human person” ([i]Dignitatis humanae[/i]) and “resides in the conditions for the exercise of the natural freedoms indispensable for the development of the human vocation” ([i]Catechism of the Catholic Church[/i]).

All this suggests two points: first—and perhaps counter-intuitively—the “common good” might best be regarded as the means, not the end; and second, the end toward which the common good is the means is not the well-being of the political community or the success of the state’s various projects, nor is it -- as John Finnis has explained -- a utilitarian “greatest good for the greatest number.” It is, instead, that set of “conditions of social life” through which we all—“individuals, families, and groups”—enjoy our rights, flourish, and become what we
ought and are called to be. It is the dignity of each particular human person—who thrives in political community with others yet bears alone what C.S. Lewis called the “weight of glory” that ultimately serves as the benchmark for the common good.

In other words, the Catholic understanding of the common good is anti-statist, in that it incorporates the principle of subsidiarity, and the insight that the person, the family, and the mediating associations of civil society are prior in dignity and right to the state; and it is personalist, in that its focus and end is the authentic development of the human person in community over the claims, goals, and values of government.

The “common good” question is, in the end, an anthropological question; it is, “what is good for the person?” and not, “what is good for the state?” It is not obvious to me that this deeper, not-merely-amiable-communitarianism understanding of “the common good” holds much appeal for those who are supply the energy fueling the Democratic Party’s current resurgence. We’ll see . . .

Lew Daly

Thank you to Joseph Bottum, Thomas Zebrowski, and Richard Garnett for their responses to my essay “In Search of the Common Good.” I wish I could respond more fully to their many engaging points.

Thomas Zebrowski’s essential point is that I do not fully account for the religious meaning of the common good. I agree, and I appreciate his advice on what that would entail. However, it is not the purpose of my essay to give a complete theological account of the common good, and I’m not sure if Zebrowski’s line of questioning is necessary for understanding the rich connections between Catholic social teaching and progressive legal theory, which is my main exegetical purpose in this essay. As Zebrowski points out, whether Catholic social thought can accommodate a pluralistic church-state order was an important question for the Church in the Progressive Era. And of course, there is still much theological and cultural controversy over this issue even as the Church has come to accept religious pluralism in the basic structures of civil law. Nevertheless, the “higher” confessional claims of the Church did not prevent intensive Catholic involvement in the debates on social policy that are my central concern, whatever other tensions existed and however partial or inflected the theological framework Ryan and others brought to bear on social questions of the day.

My essay looks at how Catholic social teaching adapted classical and medieval common-good principles to modern industrial society, and how this intellectual maturation both moved the Church to action and morally strengthened the Progressive legal advances that lay at the heart of New Deal social policy. For today’s “progressives,” the
religions part of this history is virtually unknown. For many Catholic thinkers, on the other hand, it is not well-understood how progressive legal thought and Catholic social teaching overlapped in their understanding of the destructive economic power shielded by liberal constructions of free exchange. It is disappointing indeed that none of my respondents engages with this fundamental message of my essay—namely, that the Leonine tradition has more to teach us in its rejection of economic liberalism than in the “anti-statist” concerns (to use Garnett’s term) often emphasized today.

Garnett rightly stresses the importance of subsidiarity in any contemporary vision of the common good. But we should be careful to avoid anachronistic applications of this idea which identify it with today’s “devolutionary” approach to social welfare or with libertarian ideas about government. Subsidiarity does not simply require “less government”; to the contrary, it requires as much government as is necessary for maintaining the stability and integrity of families and communities, the natural structures of society. The “subsidiary” function, as Pius XI termed it, merely ensures that whatever support the state gives, this should not alter the internal order and natural purposes of social structures, or diminish their moral influence. Such “devolution” from the state to society, however, does not override the necessity of state intervention should society fail to secure the common good for families and communities. Much of the contemporary celebration of subsidiarity fails to acknowledge this, and too often, how market forces prevent the natural structures of society from securing the common good out of their own inner life is completely ignored. The result is often little more than conservative apologetics for libertarian dreams.

Bottum’s case against the New Deal is hobbled by factual errors on poverty. He says it is “monumentally false” to believe that poverty is worse today than “when the New Deal finished.” In fact, it is Bottum who is wrong here. The poverty rate fell to an all-time low in 1973, at 11.1%, the trough of a stunning 50% decline in poverty under New Deal and Great Society policies. Perhaps he is assuming that 1945 (upon Roosevelt’s death?) is “when the New Deal finished,” in which case he is statistically correct that poverty is lower today. But this is a fact without any meaning, since New Deal policies persisted (and in fact expanded) over many decades. Even by his simpler comparison with the 1970s, however, he is also wrong. Today the poverty rate is 12.3% (and went as high as 15.3% percent in the 1980s), while in the 1970s it averaged 11.8%. So yes, poverty is in fact worse today than it was when the progressive consensus anchored in New Deal policies began to unravel. To put it in the simplest of terms, the stunning progress against poverty and inequality during the New Deal/Great Society period peaked in the early 1970s and basically stagnated or regressed after that. If Bottum considers the New Deal an “aberration” from Catholic teaching (or simply a stalking horse for abortion on demand, as he seems to argue), he will have to do a better job of explaining why reducing poverty and inequality should be so insignificant from a
Catholic perspective. You could not accuse him of a lack of originality if he tries.

Garnett and Bottum seem to agree that the Progressivism of the New Deal-era essentially doomed the Democratic-Catholic alliance over the long run. As an argument about party politics, however, this is overdrawn. Progressivism indeed produced modern anti-religious views on marriage, contraception, and other life-issues, but, historically, it was mainly the pietistic Republicans, not the populist ("Bryanist") Democrats (successfully realigned with the Catholic working class by Al Smith and FDR), who sought to legalize dangerous forms of the progressive world-view. The Supreme Court's 1927 Buck v. Bell decision, upholding state sterilization laws, was hardly the pure, logical outcome of progressive legal theory that Bottum portrays by quoting Oliver Wendell Holmes's disturbing majority opinion in the case. After all, Buck v. Bell was an 8-1 decision, and three of the "four horsemen" on the Supreme Court—so named for their later staunch opposition to New Deal legislation—joined Holmes's opinion. The lone dissenter, Pierce Butler, was notably a Catholic, but not enough of one to bother writing an opinion against the decision.

The fact is, eugenics was accepted and promoted across the political spectrum in this period. The first president of the American Eugenics Society, founded in 1922, was the neo-classical economist (and Herbert Hoover acolyte) Irving Fisher, and, of course, it was under Republican administrations in the 1920s that eugenics began to seriously influence public policy, most notably with the Immigration Act of 1924, signed by Calvin Coolidge. Harry Laughlin, who devised the sterilization law upheld in Buck v. Bell, was financed by the Carnegie Institution—robber baron money. John D. Rockefeller and his son supported eugenics. Clearly, Bottum's imputation that the progressive legal advances which secured community goods such as minimum wages, workmen's compensation, collective bargaining rights, corporate regulation, etc., are somehow a species of eugenic thought grossly over-simplifies the origins and influence of this elitist pseudo-science in the industrial age.

Bottum seems to believe that the social reforms advocated by John Ryan (and embraced by Roosevelt) grew out of an evil world-view that devalued life and revealed its true nature in the Democrats' later embrace of abortion rights. His understanding contrasts rather starkly, however, with the views of the Supreme Court justices who dissented from the Court's embrace of sexual/reproductive privacy rights (as I discuss in my essay). As Justice Black's dissent in Griswold v. Connecticut suggested, and as Justice Rehnquist's dissent in Roe v. Wade explicitly stated, the "liberal" judicial activism of Griswold and Roe rested quite comfortably on foundations installed by Lochner-era economic liberalism—the great enemy of John Ryan's and Franklin Roosevelt's belief in communal sovereignty over private economic power, "the liberty of the community," as Roosevelt put it. Justice Harry Blackmun, Roe v. Wade's author, was a pro-business Republican who moved to the left on privacy rights. I argue that these positions are
philosophically connected by an underlying liberal world-view that Catholic social teaching and New Deal social policy jointly rejected in favor of family security and communal rights. Bottum celebrates the Republican Party’s political shift against abortion rights, but this was surely calculated as part of its electoral strategy with the religious right. If it were anything more, religiously speaking, then the “Reagan Revolution” would have done much more to help the Catholic families it drew across the aisle, instead of redistributing wealth to the top and doing everything it could to help big business shed its responsibilities for securing a strong middle class. I would also add that Bottum’s “heroic” view of the Reagan Democrats is difficult to reconcile with experience. As someone who grew up in that cultural-political world, I feel certain that abortion was not the major impetus. The most important factor was race.