Enduring Violence in America: Two Essays

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Photo credits. Front cover photo: "Rioters outside the US Capitol building holding US flags and 'Make America Great Again' flags" by Tyler Member. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license. Back cover: "Ukraine Flag in Edinburgh Toward Evening, 6 May 2022," by Theodore Louis Trost

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Author's Introduction to the Essays

The essays gathered here were written during my tenure as a Nominated Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) at the University of Edinburgh and as a visiting fellow with the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University's School of Divinity, New College. It was a particular pleasure for me to spend eight months of the year 2022 in Edinburgh, as I had lived here for a similar amount of time during the first year and a half of my life (but with less awareness of my surroundings) while my father pursued doctoral studies at New College.

The first essay, *Epiphany at the Capitol: Fight Songs for the Insurrection*, offers an elaboration upon writing I had begun as part of the "Uncivil Religion" digital media project—a collaboration between the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama and The Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of American History under the direction of Michael Altman and Jerome Copulsky. In this piece, I am interested in the claims about Christian identity that seem to be advanced in song by supporters of the "Stop the Steal" campaign. While this event takes place on January 6, the Feast of Epiphany (or the 12th day of Christmas) according to the Christian church year, there seems to be no awareness of this holy day's stature among the Christians who have sojourned from afar to gather together in the nation's capital. The inference of this disregard may itself suggest a kind of epiphany.

The second essay, *Notes on The Beatles' 'White Album' in the Year 2022*, considers the historical context and literary content of certain tunes from the Beatles' 1968 album that speak to the continuing problem of violence in America over half a century later. A surprising admixture of religion and gunplay, it is argued, appears in these compositions. This essay arose in relation to the insurrection in Washington in January 2021, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the series of mass shootings that were occurring across America during the spring and summer of 2022.

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people for support, commentary, and community during this sabbatical leave: Ben Fletcher-Watson, Pauline Clark, and Steve Yearley at IASH; Jolyon Mitchell, Ulrich Schmiedel, Helen Bond, Hephzibah Israel, and Erik Tonning at New College; and my many convivial colleagues at IASH, including, but not limited to, Bharti Arora, Ann Brooks, Joan Haran, David King, C.L. Nash, David Newheiser, Victor Peterson II, Sarah Levin-Richardson, and Dana Van Kooy. I am especially grateful to Catherine Roach.

Theodore Louis Trost

8 August 2022

Edinburgh

Epiphany at the Capitol: Fight Songs for the Insurrection

Introduction: Call it Epiphany

What one calls the events that took place on the grounds of the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021, is a matter of perspective—a viewpoint acquired primarily, I suspect, through the political persuasion of the one giving name to the phenomenon. To some, the day's events constitute an exercise in "Christian Nationalism."[1] By this account, the words and deeds delivered unto the nation's television cameras and numerous hand-held devices were of a sacred nature: a display of patriotism and religious devotion; a confession of faith. To others, the forced entry into the building amounted to a secular insurrection, a desecration, or even an abomination—as combat was waged on the Capitol steps and banners of rebellion were waved inside the House of Congress. By this account, the demonstration was no mere partisan protest or a simple exercise of "legitimate political discourse."[2] Just as some second century BCE Jews were horrified when Antiochus Epiphanes mandated the worship of Zeus inside the Jerusalem Temple,[3] some 21st century CE Americans were appalled when the Confederate flag was glorified inside democracy's hallowed halls in the name of "we the people," and in the name of God.

By providence or coincidence, the 6th of January arises with great solemnity and also festivity as a holiday in the calendar of many Christian churches, for January 6th has long been designated the Feast of Epiphany. Epiphany, which means literally an "appearance," commemorates the arrival of the three kings, or magi, at the house of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem sometime after Jesus' birth, according to the account composed by the gospel writer Matthew. Liturgically speaking, Epiphany celebrates the revelation of "Emanuel," meaning "God with us," to these honourable representatives of the Gentile world and, by implication, to all of humanity.

One might draw parallels between the perambulations of the three kings, who followed a star until it came to rest over a house in Judea, and the pilgrimages of the sojourners who, following the directives of a television star, were led (though not literally) to the Capitol Building on January 6th. Some of these visitors claimed that the house they were penetrating was their house. A similar claim was not advanced by the three kings, who, after paying homage to the one whose star was on the rise, departed from the region unceremoniously. Matthew's story suggests that nothing less than an appearance of God is represented here—leading some orthodox churches to refer to the ensuing holy day as "Theophany." And with the proliferation of

Christian flags, crosses, bible quotations of all sorts, and hymn singing amidst moments of prayer and pious devotion, it is clearly the case that the God many in the crowd adored was on display and perhaps on call throughout the proceedings. All the more surprising, then, that there seems to be no recognition whatsoever among the gathered faithful of the fact that the events of January 6th take place on Epiphany, "Christianly" speaking. This raises the question of what it might mean to speak Christianly and whether the assembled crowd does.

The historical and liturgical conventions of the church year aside, there remains Matthew's text (Mt 2.1-18). And in Matthew's text, presumably powerful overlords from distant lands come to the capital city of Jerusalem, where presides King Herod, to inquire after a new king whom they wish to worship. Herod perceives this transition of power out of his hands and into the hands of another as an enormous threat to the existing order. Initially he endeavours to convince the kingly cohort to discover on his behalf the whereabouts of this newborn rival. But the three kings are suspicious of Herod's motivations and so they disregard his directive to report back to him. Still, Herod is not one to surrender power easily. He chooses chaos over the peaceful transition of power and orders the extermination of hundreds, perhaps thousands, in an effort to preserve his place of privilege. Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning follow Herod's executive order to slaughter the innocents. Sadly, this is how tyrants rule. This is how power is exercised in Matthew's first century narrative world and, apparently, how it continues to be exercised in the post-Cold War era. And, indeed, the new Cold War era....

"Epiphany" also carries with it the sense of a sudden shock of insight, a deep awareness about the character of an event, a person, or a society. With particular reference to the literary technique favoured by James Joyce, one critic has called epiphany "a sudden revelation of character through an apparently trivial incident action or single detail which differs from the others making up the story only in that it illuminates them, integrates them and gives them meaning."[4]

The following discussion investigates a few "moments of moment" that suggest something about the American character, broadly speaking, during a time of pandemic and pandemonium and, politically speaking, a liminal moment when, under normal circumstances, the peaceful transfer of power would take place. These epiphanies arose in the context of song-singing that occurred on 6 January 2021—as praise, as provocation, as protest, or as profession of faith. They were recorded by participants in the events of January 6th and placed on the internet using Parler, a social media app favoured by many among the supporters of Donald Trump.[5] Parler's archive was removed from the internet shortly after the protest, in part because of the violent content some of the videos contained. But prior to its

disappearance, the investigative organization ProPublica captured over 500 of the Parler videos, arranged them according to a timeline, and made them available online in this organized fashion as a matter of public record.[6] Subsequently, the "Uncivil Religion" project signalled certain videos for particular scrutiny because of their apparent religious content.[7] The videos under consideration here are drawn from the "Uncivil Religion" collection.

In what sense are these images, constructed by the demonstrators themselves, the record of secular *or* sacred deeds? I have intentionally brought together these two realms suggested by the historical date, on the one hand, and the Christian holiday on the other, to explore the quality of the dichotomy, or the binary, contained in the conjunction "or." Or to put this in the context of the earlier reference to James Joyce: there is a brief exchange in the second, or "Nestor," chapter of *Ulysses* during which Mr Deacy, the headmaster at the school where Stephen Dedalus works, suggests that the goal toward which all of history moves is the manifestation of God. Deacy's British sympathies suggest that the manifestation he anticipates would not be unrelated to the advancement of British Empire. In response, Stephen notes, perhaps elusively, that history is a nightmare from which he is trying to awake. As for the manifestation of God, Stephen quips: "That is God... A shout in the street."[8]

What might these shouts in the street recorded on 6 January 2021 tell us about the nation's history? And America's God?

I. "Revelation Song" and the Pious Gesture

The Call to Worship

According to the reporter who shared this first video clip on Twitter, the event depicted therein took place prior to the presidentially instigated march down Pennsylvania Avenue and the ensuing assembly at the Capitol Building.[9] As if scripted and almost liturgically, this brief video proceeds in the mode of praise and adoration. The camera pans from left to right and back again to survey a gathering, primarily of women, who sway with uplifted arms and sing along as Kari Jobe's recording of Jennie Lee Riddle's "Revelation Song" floats forth across the well-trodden lawns of the National Mall from a portable public address system.[10] Jobe sings of the "awestruck wonder" that possesses the receptive supplicant with the sounding of Jesus' all-powerful name. The name is associated with breath, perhaps the breath of life that inspired Eve and Adam; it is also called "living water," a reference to the gift of eternal life that Jesus offered to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in the Gospel of John.[11] All of these association constitute "a marvelous mystery."

Meanwhile, a young man wearing a leather jacket with the Harley-Davidson logo branded on the back, comes forward along the sidewalk. He faces eastward, in the general direction of the Capitol Building, and stands before a crowd of onlookers. American flags wave vigorously in the breeze; a poster reads "Glory to God"; and to his left, another leather-jacketed male claps, then bows as the supplicant kneels down, arms uplifted, with a book (perhaps the Bible) held high in his right hand. To the applause of the gathered, he rises up gingerly and continues along the way as the "Sanctus" of the traditional mass now converted into the rousing chorus of "Revelation Song," kicks in:

> Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty
> Who was and is and is to come
> With all creation I sing praise to the King of kings...[12]

The camera takes in various enthusiasts who have donned knitted "Trump" beanies and red "Make America Great Again" baseball caps; they add their voices to the confessing choir with hands held high. The video ends as one woman dances jubilantly, cloaked in the flag of Trump, and another MAGA-capped woman sings along reverentially.

The "Revelation Song" that provides the musical context for this recorded activity is based upon the fifth chapter of the Bible's Book of Revelation. The song itself begins with the words "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain" (Rev

5.12), a reference to the Christ, who appears before the heavenly host in the guise of a slaughtered lamb. Only the Lamb of God, the "Agnus Dei" of the mass, is able to open the seven seals of the scroll held in the right hand of the one who sits on the heavenly throne. With the unrolling of the scroll, an apocalypse ensues for the following seventeen chapters of John the Revelator's book, ultimately bringing the world and the Bible to a close. While the narrative context is one of doom and gloom, except for the remnant few, the musical score seems almost ecstasy-inducing, as if composed on behalf of the righteous (or self-righteous) ones who would number themselves among the chosen.

The Pious Gesture

This glorification of the conformed or transformed is celebrated in the video when a young man approaches the sidewalk aisle. He performs a gesture of piety as codified in evangelical circles: he falls down on bended knee as if before the Almighty and approaches, as it were, the throne of grace. This gesture is also familiar in popular culture. Indiana Jones, recalling the remark from his father's Holy Grail notebook that "only the penitent man will pass," realises that the humble man must kneel before God; he does so—thereby avoiding the decapitation that would have brought his quest to an ignominious conclusion. Instead, he is able to advance toward the carpenter's cup.[13]

While the young man's seemingly singular religious act engenders acclaim from those assembled, it is also appears to reinforce a sense of common identity and purpose. Perhaps the "Revelation Song" communicates the quality of this event. Perhaps the power of Jesus is on display here and his mighty name fills his devotees with wonder. But of course, the name of Jesus is not the only name that this scene reveals.[14]

The Name

The name of Jesus is glorified in the "Revelation Song" suggesting the importance of God's name in the Book of Revelation. Indeed, in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation, John sees "the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev 14.1 NIV). These are the righteous ones, destined for salvation. They appear in contrast to another cohort who are mentioned in the previous chapter of Revelation. These others "receive a mark on their

right hands or on their foreheads"; John goes on to explain that the mark "is the name of the beast or the number of its name" (Rev 13.16-17 NIV).

The name of Trump is, of course, worn prominently on the foreheads of his followers in this particular video clip. The name also appears on the flags people use as wraps to keep themselves warm in the bleak midwinter. While wrapping oneself in the flag is a colloquial expression for patriotism, the clothes one puts on is also a biblical concern. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, encourages his co-religionists to "clothe [themselves] with the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13.14). To the Thessalonians he recommends another wardrobe: putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet (1 Thess 5.8). There is a suggestion of military armour here and, axiomatically, some in the crowd are literally dressed in military garb. But others bear the name of Trump in their mode of dress—a name that, like Jesus' name, would seem to be empowering.

II. Crush the Enemy

Time Frame

While the previous episode cannot be placed precisely in chronological context, I have suggested it also exits in a version of liturgical time: *in illo tempore*[15]; the masses gathered as if for mass; transfiguration time. This next episode captures 40 seconds or so of a gathering to the west and slightly north of the Capitol Building—which comes into and out of view over the course of the filming. And there *is* a record of when this action took place. So to begin with, here's a timeline of events leading up to this moment.

1:10 President Trump ended his "Stop the Steal" speech by encouraging his followers to march on the Capitol Building.

2:11 Dominic Pezzola, also known as Spazz, a Proud Boy from Rochester, New York, breaks a window on the northwest side of the Capitol with a purloined plastic shield.

2:12 The first rioters enter the Capitol through the broken window and open the door for their collaborators.

2:13 Vice President Pence is escorted out of the Senate chamber and the Senators are dismissed.

2:16 Federal Protective Service officers report that the House and Senate are being locked down.

2:20 The House is declared in recess as members are escorted out of the chamber.[16]

Two minutes after the Congressional Representatives leave, the "Worship Singing" video is recorded.[17]

The scene is established with the west side of the Capitol evident in the distance and slightly to the south and east. The camera quickly pans past many bystanders. A red-ski-capped woman holds a "Stop the Steal" sign at her side; a man packs up his thermos; the camera pans back to the left and the Capitol building temporarily dominates the frame. In the foreground, a woman folds up a blanket as the man behind her offers food to his neighbour. In the distance, Trump banners and American flags wave in the breeze along with the Christian flag in the midst of them. The camera returns to the right where the woman with the red ski cap has switched signs and now clutches one that says "Save America"; the man with the thermos has packed up his picnic gear; and bystanders have garbed themselves in American and Trump

flags. Throughout the video, a choir composed primarily of women sing in unison what might be a termed a "Christian fight song." As best I can tell, it draws on three passages from the Bible with these lyrics:

> "...The foundations of the world are laid bare at the blast of his breath"[18];
>
> "The Lord will fight the battles for his people when we cry aloud unto him"[19];
>
> "...And he will crush the enemy with his..."[20]

The Tailgaters' Fight Song

Familiar to fans of American football and other sporting events around the country, this gathering resembles a tailgating party (minus the pick-up trucks, which would not be have been allowed on the Capitol grounds in any case). People are packing up from their picnics, offering food, milling about, and listening to music while the main event, or the Big Game, takes place nearby. Indeed, behind the singers a steady flow of pedestrians advances in the direction of the Capitol Building. The partisans are decked out in wardrobes that proclaim their loyalties. Slogans of affiliation are exchanged and interchanged: "Save America!" "Stop the Steal!" As in the previous example, many display a sign of their allegiance on their foreheads: "Make America Great Again"; "Trump 2020." While some mill about, most are gathered to hear the song of solidarity that their comrades offer in concert.

A typical fight song rallies support for the team on one side of a contest and demonizes the opposition. The University of Michigan's "Hail to the Victors," for example, engages language of superiority, much like the rhetoric of President Trump, to declare its athletes "the leaders and best." These "champions of the west" are cheered on with repeated and resounding shouts of "Hail!" (the Germanic intonations of which may ring a bit ominously in the aftermath of World War II).[21] In a similar manner, the fight song advanced by the feminine choir conjures up a warrior God, perhaps the one Joshua called upon to oversee the incursion into the land of Canaan. The video ends abruptly with the assertion that the Lord will crush the enemy—here perhaps eliciting the God of Ps 110. 5-6:

> The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. [NIV; see also the EHV and NABRE for equivalent translations]

Or perhaps called upon here is the God of Psalm 137.9, a song that implores the destruction of Israel's paradigmatic enemy, Babylon, with a shocking endorsement of infanticide:

> Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.

Or maybe this is a plea to Jesus, who by virtue of a customary evangelical exegesis is said to have crushed the head of the serpent who tempted Eve in Genesis 3, thereby defeating the powers of evil.[22]

The Figurative and the Literal

In the context of a sporting contest, the bellicose language of partisanship that is characteristic of fight songs is one piece of a larger, controlled and ritualized event. One side or the other might intone the lines from Queen's "We Will Rock You," for example; generally speaking, however, the threat of violence is not really being advanced through this recitation. But what happens when the ritualized violence of a sporting event is absent from the playing field and only the partisans with their fight songs remain? With divine backing, will the Lord "fight the battles for his people" and "crush the enemy with his..." (whatever it might be)? That would be one interpretation of what happened shortly after this song was sung. Footage from a broadcast by WUSA, the Washington, DC, CBS-affiliated television station, shows a column of several hundred Trump supporters rhythmically and systematically lunging forward in an effort to break through a line of police officers as they endeavour to bar an interior doorway into the Capitol Building. In the process, Officer Daniel Hodges is trapped on the edge of a revolving door and is being literally crushed by the legion of demonstrators.[23] He does cry aloud to his companions and is eventually rescued.

Is there a causal connection between the God who crushes and the crushing of Officer Hodges? To put it differently, does word become flesh... a possible implication of Stephen Dedalus' quip? In any case, a certain confidence is displayed as the choir praises or provokes the warrior God.

This confidence carries over into another performance that was recorded somewhat later by members of the same group and it serves to give a sense of how group formation is advanced through song. In the video "A Crowd of Worshipful Singers," declarations are made about who "we" are, and the question becomes, how far does this common identity extend?[24] And how far are "we" willing to go? What might the storming of the Capitol have to do with this fight song, or others like it?

In this later video, a choir that includes a few men and several children sing in unison and assert their common Christian identity. "We are the people of the Lord," the congregated proclaim proudly. Meanwhile, the same Christian flag that was present from another angle in the earlier video hovers over these proceedings as well. This hymn was written by Robert Gay, who, along with his wife Stacey, is the senior pastor and apostle at the High Praise Church in Panama City, Florida. The refrain affirms a particular quality of holiness that this generation claims to possess as it undertakes its godly mission. This mission is most clearly articulated in a verse that connects the praise of God with the power of the sword that the gathered belligerents intend to use in order to "possess this land." This act of conquest is justified because the singers understand themselves to be "the people of the Lord." As such, they constitute a "holy nation" within a nation, called forth to praise the Lord as his "chosen generation."[25]

Once again arises the question of the relationship between literal and figurative language. Are swords meant to be in the hands of citizens who locate themselves on the green lawns of the nation's capital? Or has one merely put on the full armour of the Lord, empowered, thereby, to fulfil the worthy purpose of conquest, of taking possession of the land?[26]

And what might the relationship of this chosen generation be to other generations that came together to sing on this historic lawn the songs of group identity? Songs like "We shall overcome" by 200,000 in 1963; Or half a million marching on Washington and singing "All we are saying is give peace a chance" in 1969? Who are "we the people"?

III. The Lion, The Crowd, and *Amazing Grace*[27]

The last video to be considered was shot from near the western entrance to the Capitol Building at 4:02 p.m.[28] The camera pans left and downward over a large crowd to focus momentarily on an opened door at ground-level through which various individuals pass. Some in the crowd are singing the first verse of the hymn "Amazing Grace." The camera pans back to the right to include numerous banners intermingled with American flags and an array of partisan placards. Abruptly the camera zooms into the crowd and alights momentarily on two signs. One banner reads: "Jesus is my Savior. Trump is my President." A second banner bears the image of a lion above whose head is emblazoned the name "Trump"; below his mane is written "Proverbs 30:30"—a biblical reference that some in the crowd might recognize as containing the words "The lion in you never retreats." The camera angles farther to the right, then upward and brings into view a multitude on the scaffolding across the way. As the gathered celebrate this "festive" moment, some seem also to encourage their groundling peers to press onward with their forcible incursion into the breached edifice of representative democracy. Meanwhile, those singing "Amazing Grace" have reached the end of the first verse and are struggling to recall the words to the second. "Nobody knew the words," a voice from the fractured chorus declares. As if to punctuate or to justify the hymn's ignominious demise, the voice adds, "Ah! Something's burning my eyes." The video ends.

The Crowd

The image of thousands assembled before a great civic shrine conjures up associations of biblical proportion. In Matthew's Gospel, for example, crowds process before and after Jesus as he enters the city of Jerusalem to the uniform cries of "Hosanna!" With the advance upon the Temple, Matthew notes that "the whole city was in turmoil." Jesus himself enters the Temple unmolested and, like an exorcist of economic exploitation, casts out the money changers and the merchants. The crowd outside is not necessarily aware of what's going on inside but their very presence speaks loudly in affirmation of those interior machinations. Still, Matthew's gospel offers a cautionary tale about mob action. For in less than a week, a similar crowd of Jerusalemites and their companions from the scattered precincts of diasporic Israel will unite their voices in a different petition: "Crucify!" On January 6, roughly two millennia later, intimations of this executioner's call were sounding on Capitol Hill, as folks in other parts of the crowd were captured on video footage chanting "Hang Mike Pence"—their hero's evangelical

confidante and right-hand man now cast as betrayer.[29] The loyalty of the crowd, it would seem, at least for now, was single-minded in its devotion to the one man who had assured his followers that he would "be there with you" as they walked down to the Capitol to "cheer on" members of the government's legislative branch in the effort to discredit the results of the recent election.

The Lion

Although President Trump was not physically engaged in the advance upon the Capitol, his presence was heralded among the many banners that bore witness to him. Of these, the lion stands out as a particularly salient stand-in for the then-President, for he had associated himself with the lion already four years earlier during his campaign for the Republican nomination. On 28 February 2016, candidate Trump retweeted this proverbial assertion: "It is better to live one day as a lion than 100 years as a sheep." When it was pointed out that these watchwords came from Benito Mussolini, the fascist dictator of Italy, Trump responded, "What difference does it make whether it's Mussolini or somebody else? It's certainly a very interesting quote."[30]

Certainly the lion embodies virtues that Trump has espoused over the years: power, virility, and dominion, among them. In Christian iconography, the Lion of Judah makes an appearance in the Book of Revelation (5.5) and is thereby associated with the second coming of Christ. Perhaps the lion banner connects Trump to the return of Christ, either as harbinger or personification. But the dizzying metamorphoses that constitute the Book of Revelation undermine too quick a correlation between Trump and Christ in this regard. For the sheep, who are despised in the Mussolini quote that Trump favours, find their symbolic fulfilment in the Lamb that the Lion becomes in the very next verse from Revelation (5.6). The Lion as sacrificial Lamb is the one deemed worthy to break the seven seals, open the scroll, and usher in a new age. Similarly, while the biblical lion who refuses to retreat, according to Proverbs 30.30, may serve as inspiration to those attacking the Capitol, his apparition in Proverbs is only penultimate. The next and last verse of Proverbs 30 provides these words of wisdom and warning to any would-be Lion King:

> If you play the fool and exalt yourself,
> or if you plan evil,
> clap your hand over your mouth!
>
> For as churning cream produces butter,

and as twisting the nose produces blood,
so stirring up anger produces strife (Prov 30.31).

Amazing Grace

Whether this video clip chronicles an occurrence of strife or an occasion of celebration is a matter of interpretation. The signs of the times are blurred and ambiguous. The sequence does come with its own soundtrack, though, and thereby provides a third intimation of religiosity for communal consideration. With its portrait of radical transformation from a state of being lost to the celebration of a new life, John Newton's eighteenth century hymn "Amazing Grace" has long captured the American imagination in its conjuration of limitless possibility—in this life and beyond. The hymn became popular during the nineteenth century evangelical revivals of the Second Great Awakening. In the twentieth century it was rendered as both a gospel hymn and a song of solidarity among partisans of the civil rights movement. Mahalia Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Joan Baez, and Judy Collins all made popular recordings of "Amazing Grace," and Arlo Guthrie drew his set to a close at Woodstock with his folk-revivalist version of the tune.[31]

In recent memory, the hymn "Amazing Grace" was brought to public attention by President Obama, who sang it acapella at the memorial service for Pastor Clementa Pinkney, one of nine victims of gun violence who were killed at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015.[32] Obama drew his eulogy to a close by linking the affirmation of "amazing grace" to the patriotic anthem "America the Beautiful," with its plea, "America, God shed his grace on thee."[33]

What kind of grace is being shed upon the nation on this particular day of reckoning, while some members of the crowd sing together "Amazing Grace"? Do these voices proclaim a redemption or a rededication of national purpose that God's grace affords? Or do they celebrate an efficacious grace, a guaranteed "election"—or predestination—that ensures the righteousness of their cause apart from any contestable election result of mere human calculation? Is this a manifestation of the propinquity, the "brotherhood" that "America the Beautiful" prays for, an irresistible goodness that prevails "from sea to shining sea," or at least from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial? Is the flock gathered on the National Mall the sheep who once were lost but now are lionized? The video clip draws to a close with a reference to burning eyes. Are these the eyes of those who now can see? Or is the inverse operative and those who could see have now been blinded? The video ends on this unresolved note....

Toward a Conclusion: We the People

In lieu of a conclusion, I'd like to put in play several observations that emerge from the way I have discussed the secular sacredness or the sacred secularity on display on Epiphany Day, January 6, 2021.

Blasphemy

This meditation began with Stephen Dedalus' assertion that God is a shout in the street. There was indeed a great deal of shouting on 6 January 2021; and at least some Americans took these shouts to be godly or God-inspired. The protesters in Washington, DC, came to voice support for President Trump in his effort to reverse the results of the 2020 election. There is an element of reciprocity in this gesture, as Trump had promised early on to give voice to those in American society who understood themselves to have been discounted, dismissed, and silenced. Specifically, in his "Nomination Speech" before the Republican National Convention in 2016, Donald Trump said this:

> I have visited the laid-off factory workers, and the communities crushed by our horrible and unfair trade deals. These are the forgotten men and women of our country. People who work hard but no longer have a voice. *I AM* your voice![34]

This statement resonates strangely in the biblically-habituated ear, for in the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus is asked by the chief priest: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus responds with a bold "I am," a verbal construct recognizable as the name of God to those attuned to a particular nuance in the Greek language. Because he utters this presumed blasphemy, Jesus is finally deemed guilty of a capital crime by the council and is handed over to the Romans for execution (Mk 14.61-64).

Ironically and confessionally—at least in the narrative world of Mark's Gospel—Jesus *is* the Christ. With regard, then, to the "Epiphany Uprising" it appears as if, at least for some of Christ's followers, Donald Trump had assumed God-like status—such that: at the name of Trump every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Trump won; or even, that Trump is the One (compare Phil 2.10). And so the voice of Trump, while not necessarily the voice of God, certainly advances a theo-political rhetoric, one in which religion and politics, secular and sacred, are intricately entwined—as Stephen Dedalus suggested in 1904 (or 1922) in the context of Irish Catholic Ireland and as was demonstrated in the events of January 6, 2021.

Unity

And hasn't this always been the case? This essay has focused on the songs of the insurrection, one of which was "Amazing Grace." Not exclusively a religious song, "Amazing Grace" has been a top ten hit in many iterations. The song figures prominently in the repertoire of bagpipers around the world, for example, and especially in Edinburgh. Lyrically, "Amazing Grace" is about a Christian conversion, one that takes place in the context of the slave trade. When President Obama introduced the hymn in his eulogy at Charlotte, he suggested that the victims of violence had found that grace, presumably in a version of the Christian afterlife. But Obama makes an intriguing move. He brings the matter back down to earth. He says:

> Through the example of their lives, [the dead] have now passed ["that grace"] on to us. May we find ourselves worthy of that precious and extraordinary gift—as long as our lives endure. May grace now lead them home. May God continue to shed his grace on the...UNITED... States of America.

Obama counsels that the gift of grace has been handed over by the departed to their mourners, whose duty it now becomes to live in grace. He then alludes to the patriotic song "America the Beautiful" and its reference to God's grace. He utters a plea for political unity by underscoring the "United" in the United States of America. In the move from "Amazing Grace" to "America the Beautiful," Obama advances the first person singular narrative of religious conversion to the first person plural of national identity.

We Are Free at Last

In his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, which was also delivered in close proximity to the Capitol Building almost three score years before the Epiphany 2021 event, Martin Luther King made similar rhetorical gestures mixing national and religious identities. King's speech starts out with a reference to the patriotic song "My Country 'Tis of Thee"—which might have been the national anthem of the United States were it not for the melody, which it shares with Great Britain's "God Save the Queen."[35] Just as Obama landed on the word "grace," King lands on "freedom." He then changes the tune to "the words of the old Negro spiritual," moving away from the patriotic to a religious song, and anticipates its resolution: "Free at last! Free

at last!" But to underscore that what he has in mind is a liberation of the whole community, not only the salvation of one individual, he ends his speech with the words: "Thank God Almighty, WE are free at last!"[36]

And is this not, in the end, another version of "Christian Nationalism"? The fight songs of the insurrection, the eulogy of President Obama, and the sermonic speech of Martin Luther King all intermingle religious and nationalistic, secular and sacred, language. If there is a qualitative difference between what was enacted in song and deed on the day of Epiphany 2021 and the speech acts of President Obama and Dr King, this difference needs to be articulated by people of faith as well as loyal citizens. For this is both a matter of civility and theology.

Notes on The Beatles' "White Album" in the Year 2022

Prelude

Joan Didion's essay, "The White Album," is something like the stained glass window in the narthex of Winchester Cathedral: an elaborate mosaic of brokenness and repair. Didion begins with the memorable words "we tell ourselves stories in order to live." And the way we live, she continues, is "by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images" that make up our "actual experience."[1]

There was a time before 1642 when the entryway to the Winchester Cathedral contained scenes from the life of Christ and was populated by exemplary characters from the Bible. But then, during the English Civil War, soldiers from among the Parliamentarian forces wrested the relic remains of ancient Saxon saints from their crypts in the sanctuary and, in acts of Puritanical rage or deranged drunkenness, shattered the cathedral's giant stained glass window with the thrown bones of the dead. After the soldiers departed, Winchester residents collected the broken pieces of glass and, eighteen or so years later, repositioned them—but haphazardly and without pattern—back into their stonework frames: to be contained and connected by narrow strips of lead.[2]

In like manner also, journalist Joan Didion gathers fragments of stories that lead precariously, one to another, until, at last, a composite portrait comes into view. It is the portrait of an era: a "shifting phantasmagoria" of the late 1960s; or perhaps, as fashioned into an image that somehow signals for her an all-consuming anxiety: "petals on a wet black bough."[3] This bough contrasts sharply—or it connects—with the idea of an album awash in white, or even whiteness: an empty canvas awaiting imaginings. For her part, Didion's album of narrative fragments includes a tale about the publication of Eldridge Cleaver's prison memoir *Soul on Ice* and records Black Panther Party leader Huey P. Newton's assertion that "political power begins at the end of a gun" alongside references to, among other things, the murder of Sharon Tate, and Jim Morrison's "black vinyl pants with no underwear."[4]

"The White Album" also serves as catalogue for a number of the era's popular songs, including: "Midnight Confessions"; "Love Me Two Times" and "Break on Through" by the Doors; "Wichita Lineman;" and "I Heard it Through the Grapevine."[5] But strangely enough, no song from The Beatles' "White Album" receives consideration in Didion's essay. It is as if the album was meant by mere mention to serve as imaginary soundtrack to her collection of fragments. Or perhaps the dilemma described at essay's end—to use writing as the means to see what it all means—is displaced onto the Beatles' "White Album" for further elaboration.

I

Dismayed by the Russian effort that began on the 24th of February to annex the nation of Ukraine, I found myself listening with some frequency to The Beatles' song "Back in the USSR" as the year 2022 unwound. For fifty years or so, this first song on the "White Album" had seemed to be entirely disconnected from the harsh realities of the Cold War: walls, missiles, militarization, mutually assured destruction, and so forth.[6] But now that the USSR was making a comeback of sorts, the song sounded differently. The thought of celebrating the return of the USSR, rather than the simple return of an individual from across the Atlantic to the USSR, tore an opening into the song-world through which I had not previously ventured.

Like the tunes it imitates or alludes to—Chuck Berry's "Back in the USA," and "California Girls" by the Beach Boys—"Back in the USSR" lists various regions of the nation as it was then constituted: Georgia, Moscow, and Ukraine.[7] During the Cold War Era, this sort of a neighbourly salute might have served as a hand across the water or a parting of the Iron Curtain. But under the condition of invasion, the seeming celebration of the Ukraine girls, most poignantly, signalled a certain dissonance. Did the raconteur in the Beatles' song really think himself lucky to be "back in the US... back in the US... back in the USSR"? And what insinuation of commonality was being intoned in the twice-repeated "US" prior to the initials' resolution into "USSR"?

After Chuck Berry arrives by jet from overseas in his archetypical homecoming song from the year 1959, his persona proclaims, "I'm so glad I'm living in the USA." But is he? Or is this, too, a ruse in the face of cruel circumstance? In the list of cities that he longed for while he was abroad, Chuck Berry includes "Detroit, Chicago, Chattanooga, Baton Rouge." All of these cities were segregated by race at the time, some of them by law. Is this what Chuck missed "'til [he] got back to the USA"? And in their homage to Berry's song, did the Beatles draw a parallel—not simply to the shared humanity of people in different parts of the world, but also to other similarities between the world's great powers: the inhumanity of systems that separate the world into simple binaries of us and them, for example; or the violence that was taken for granted as guarantor of the established order?

These kinds of questions arose for me with increasing vigour in the aftermath of the massacre at Uvalde, Texas, on the 24th of May 2022. On that day, nineteen children and two teachers were shot to death at the Robb Elementary School before their killer, named "Salvador," was executed by officers of the law.[8] If viewed upon the screen of the "White Album," what does this story tell us about how to live? What writing, following Didion's directive, could even begin to make meaning out of this destruction?

II

The "White Album" by the Beatles is inextricably linked to 1968—a year of turbulence, civil unrest, and grave violence. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been assassinated in April of that year; presidential candidate Robert Kennedy, whose opposition to the Vietnam war figured prominently in his primary campaign, was shot to death in June. Meanwhile, riots broke out in many parts of the world: France, Brazil, Tunisia, Pakistan, Mexico, Italy, Northern Ireland, and even Sweden. In August, as Soviet-led troops invaded Czechoslovakia, demonstrators were beaten with clubs by police in the streets of Chicago during the Democratic Party's national convention. On the same day that the Democratic delegates were called to order, The Beatles released as prelude to the "White Album" their non-album single, "Hey Jude." With its plea to "take a sad song and make it better," "Hey Jude" may have met with overwhelming commercial success because of its hopefulness or its aversion to "making the world a little colder"—even as the Cold War warmed up and dragged on. On the flip side of the single was waxed a version of the song "Revolution," which cautioned against the recourse to destructive behaviour and harmonized reassuringly: "it's gonna be all right."[9] A slower and slightly more ambiguous version of "Revolution" was included among the many tracks on the "White Album" when it was released in the United States on 22 November 1968—the fifth anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's death by gunfire.[10]

III

Officially titled *The Beatles*, the "White Album" received widespread praise for its songcraft, technological experimentation, and variety of styles and themes.[11] Nevertheless, certain politically-engaged scribes argued that the album consisted of trifling reveries, escapist parodies, and silly diversions. The age demanded realism and radical engagement from its artists, these critics insisted. The tunes on the Rolling Stones' recent album, *Beggars Banquet*, were offered as exemplars of an unapologetic social consciousness in sharp contrast to Beatles-esque pleasantries.[12] Praised in particular, from this point of view, was the Stones' tune "Street Fighting Man," with its radical demand for "palace revolution." Also prized were the existential provocations of "Sympathy for the Devil," in lines such as "I shouted out who killed the Kennedys?" followed by the unsettling aside "when after all it was you and me."[13]

The America conjured up by the Rolling Stones in the aforementioned songs is not the America The Beatles *seem* to engage on the "White Album." The Rolling Stones confront the violence of assassination and address it directly. They also accept that the times are "a-changing." Whereas, once upon a time, it was the joy and pleasure of American youth to respond to the call of Martha Reeves and the Vandellas to go *dancing* in the streets of Chicago, New Orleans, and New York ("...can't forget the Motor City"), other actions now needed to be performed there.[14] As Mick Jagger echoed and proclaimed: "the summer's here and the time is right for *fighting* in the streets."

By contrast, The Beatles offered up a tune like "Honey Pie" with its nostalgic glance backwards to the "Roaring Twenties." The song is cast as a dance hall show tune in the tradition of the Beatles' own "When I'm Sixty-Four," or the recently popular hit by The New Vaudeville Band called "Winchester Cathedral."[15] As the story unfolds, a working girl from the impoverished north country crosses the Atlantic to find her fortune "in the USA." This rags-to-riches scenario advances a classic and clichéd take on the "American Dream"—the same dream that so motivated the also fictional Jay Gatz, an obscure farm boy from North Dakota and F. Scott Fitzgerald's emblem of the "Jazz Age." In her case, "Honey Pie" becomes "a legend of the silver screen." She attains that greatness so often held out as promise by America. Her would-be lover, too "lazy" to pursue his heart's desire to Hollywood, pines this song into existence back in England. His ambition is not American-sized enough, it would seem.

In the parallel success narrative that echoes and informs "Honey Pie," Jay Gatz undergoes a name change and is transformed into "The Great Gatsby."[16] He too becomes notoriously famous and the subject of general

admiration. It does not turn out so well for him in the end, however. In a case of mistaken identity, Gatsby meets with an untimely death: a betrayed husband with a revolver shoots Gatsby as he looks skyward, floating on an air mattress in his mansion's pool. But that's another story....

IV

That could be the story of "Rocky Racoon" as related on the "White Album." Cast as a honkytonk, barroom ballad, what is remarkable about this song is how unremarkable it is. This is where the irony of the "White Album" begins to surface—and this irony meanders through the rest of the tunes under consideration in these notes. "Rocky Racoon" is a pastiche of a country music tune. It is in part a "somebody did somebody wrong song." It also includes the showdown in the saloon scenario, a recurring event in tales of the Old West. And finally, there is the narrative of conversion and new beginning, as a once wayward individual finds religion and abandons his rough and rowdy ways.

When he checks into his room at the local saloon, Rocky notices the Bible placed by the Gideons, but the revenge he seeks relegates the Bible's presence, initially, to a trivial detail. Rocky already carries the gun he intends to use to shoot off the "legs" of his rival. But when he bursts into the room where a hoedown is taking place, it appears that "Danny Boy" is also armed and ready to defend his own freedom and the honour of his consort, the polyonymous "Nancy," who, like so many other Americans, has escaped ethnic declension through a variety of "aka's." Not one to ask questions, Dan shoots first, rendering Rocky immobile. After losing his beloved, Rocky does manage to retrieve the Bible that the Gideons left behind; with it, he inaugurates a religious revival. Now featuring an entrepreneurial religionist, the story of Rocky Racoon becomes another American success story.[17]

Taken for granted in this song, on the one hand, is the notion that a young boy from the Black Mountain Hills of Dakota is qualified to inspire and preside over the religious lives of others based on the chance acquisition, or theft, of a Bible; and, on the other hand, that guns are by nature (or right) readily available for anyone to use against a perceived opponent. This might seem to be some kind of a joke; and if "Rocky Racoon" were the only song on the album to mention religion and guns in the same breath, it could be passed off as a novelty. But it isn't.

V

With its structure and the feel of a nursery rhyme, "The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill" appears initially as a song of innocence. It even contains a chorus of high-pitched voices that are ushered into song in response to the instruction: "all the children sing." And so the children combine their voices into the inquiry that constitutes the song's catchy refrain: "Hey Bungalow Bill, what did you kill, Bungalow Bill?" The verses, meanwhile, tell the story of a hunting expedition cast in the mode of a comic book superhero adventure.

But an insidious underside unfolds as the tiger hunt progresses. In the first verse, Bungalow Bill is described in unflattering terms as "the All-American bullet-headed Saxon mother's son." Suddenly appears the possibility of violent inclination that is part of a nationalist heritage nurtured in an attachment to a mother whose ethnic origin identifies her and her progeny with pretentions to racial superiority. In the second verse, the party of white people undertakes an incursion deep into the jungle—a kind of adventurism that parallels the expeditions of the American armed forces into Vietnam at the time. Suddenly, a mighty tiger catches the hunting party off guard, so Bungalow Bill undergoes something of a transformation. Like Billy Batson of comic book fame, he transforms into "Captain Marvel" and shoots the tiger "right between the eyes"—perhaps while uttering the magical word "Shazam!"[18] In the third verse, the children, perplexed by this execution, engage Bill in a theological dialogue, asking him whether it was a "sin" to kill. Bill's mother intervenes on her son's behalf to justify her boy's behaviour. She argues that it is not a sin to kill the tiger when he "looks so fierce"; she goes on to suggest that the tiger's dangerous appearance alone establishes sufficient grounds to vindicate her son's actions. And with that explanation, the chorus returns to merry inquisition once again: "Hey Bungalow Bill, what did you kill, Bungalow Bill?"

And is this not the relentless refrain of school children in America, after yet another schoolyard is riddled with gunfire and the chairs of cherished classmates linger unoccupied: the preserve of the perished? And is not the mother's justification of her son's deed the basis for laws that enable citizens to use deadly force to defend themselves against a perceived threat, that is to say: to "stand your ground"? And so the death of a tiger in the jungles of India (or Vietnam) in 1968 is linked imaginatively and inevitably to the death of Trayvon Martin on a street in Florida in February 2012.[19] That's "The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill."

VI

The tragic irony of the "White Album" vibrates most intensely with "Happiness is a Warm Gun." The song consists of various musical and lyrical fragments that are held together by juxtaposition and force of will. It starts out as a song of experience with reference to a girl who does not miss much and who is well acquainted with a mysterious practice identified as "the touch of the velvet hand"; this proclivity is elaborated upon with a simile involving a lizard. But before a correspondence between images is disclosed, a man in the crowd appears. There is a suggestion of perversion—his eyes deceive as his hands work overtime—and defecation too, the likely consequence of a peculiar diet involving soap. From here the song descends to the paradoxical uptown pits in search of some sort of emotional or pharmaceutical rescue: some fix that might put the world in order. The intimation of order arises next with the mention of "Mother Superior," likely a member of an order herself. This abbess, however, has acted precipitously. She has "jumped the gun"—an expression that may resonate with the sexual overtones that resound throughout the song's disparate movements; or it may serve to unite the theme of religion with its fetishized object, the gun. Once this conjoining is accomplished, ecstasy of a sort ensues. All the chaos of the song's disparate shards come together as in a stained glass window with the triumphant pronouncement "Happiness is a warm gun!" held in place with a choral accompaniment that concurs approvingly: "Bang, bang; shoot, shoot."[20]

John Lennon got the idea for this song from the title of an article in the National Rifle Association's flagship magazine, *The Rifleman*. "Happiness is a Warm Gun" appeared in the May 1968 edition, just a month after the murder by rifle of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis and a month before Robert F. Kennedy was shot to death in Los Angeles.[21] In his article, author Warren Herlihy recounts the story of his son John's initiation into the shooting culture, starting at age seven, and his development into manhood as measured by the possession of increasingly more powerful guns.[22] In his song, John Lennon encases the sense of invulnerability that gun possession engenders in a dubious double negative: "I know nobody can do me no harm because happiness is a warm gun." But harm is, of course, foreordained when the members of society are weaponized. Both Jay Getz, from the farmlands of North Dakota and Rocky Racoon from the Black Mountain Hills of Dakota were on the receiving end of gun violence. And so was John Lennon, who was killed by bullets from a legally purchased revolver on 8 December 1980, under the archway of the Dakota Apartments in New York City.

Postlude

An enduring and parabolic quality is characteristic of the songs "Honey Pie," "Rocky Racoon," "The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill," and "Happiness is a Warm Gun" as they appear on the "White Album." Not simple ditties for school children, novelty tunes, or nostalgic reveries for retirees recalling a more civilized age, these are elegant songs of protest against a culture of death.

The violence that permeates public discourse in America today, the fighting in the streets and inside the violated House of Congress, and the mass shootings in the malls, parking lots, and schoolhouses of the nation are all anticipated, enshrined, and mourned in these songs of yesteryear, these songs from the turbulent year of 1968. Love has been perverted, as George Harrison describes the dilemma in another tune from the "White Album," even while he holds on to the hope that "in every mistake we must surely be learning." Following Joan Didion, this may be one of those stories we tell ourselves in order to live. And yet, since the massacre in Uvalde, Texas, other towns have been added to the list of places made notorious (and then forgotten) because of gun violence, among them: Tulsa, Chattanooga, Charleston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Highland Park, and Detroit.[23] As Harrison's song concedes in the eulogy that serves, over half a century after its composition, as postlude for these notes on the "White Album":

"Still my guitar gently weeps."

Notes: *Epiphany at the Capitol: Fight Songs for the Insurrection*

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from *The New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) of the Bible, (New York, NY: National Council of Churches, 1989). Also mentioned in the essay are: *The New International Version* [NIV] *of the Bible,* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica [formerly International Bible Society], 2011); *The Evangelical Heritage Version* [EHV] *of the Bible* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2019); and *The New American Bible, Revised Edition* [NABRE] (Philadelphia, PA: American Bible Society, 2011).

[1] See, for example, John Chadwick, "Christian Nationalism Explained: An Interview with Rutgers Professor Joseph Williams," https://sas.rutgers.edu/news-a-events/news/newsroom/faculty/3406-religious-nationalism. Accessed 18 April 2022. See also Mike Cummings, "Yale sociologist Phil Gorski on the threat of white Christian nationalism," *Yale News* (15 March 2022), https://news.yale.edu/2022/03/15/yale-sociologist-phil-gorski-threat-white-christian-nationalism. Accessed 18 April 2022.

[2] See Jonathan Weisman and Reid J. Epstein, "G.O.P. Declares Jan. 6 Attack 'Legitimate Political Discourse,'" *New York Times* (1 February 2022): p.A1. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/04/us/politics/republicans-jan-6-cheney-censure.html. Accessed 18 April 2022.

[3] 1 Maccabees 1.29-64.

[4] Irene Hendry, "Joyce's Epiphanies," *Sewanee Review* 54 (1946), pp.449-467 [461]. Cited in Wim Tigges, "The Significance of Trivial Things: Towards a Typology of Literary Epiphanies," in Wim Tigges, ed., *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Epiphany*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp.11-35 [11].

[5] Robert Hart, "Parler's Popularity Plummets As Data Reveals Little Appetite For Returning 'Free Speech' App Favored By Conservatives," *Forbes*, 2 June 2021; updated 10 December 2021: https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2021/06/02/parlers-popularity-plummets-as-data-reveals-little-appetite-for-returning-free-speech-app-favored-by-conservatives/#open-web-0. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[6] Lena V. Groeger, Jeff Kao, Al Shaw, Moiz Syed, and Maya Eliahou, "What Parler Saw During the Attack on the Capitol," *ProPublica: The Insurrection*, 17 January 2021: https://projects.propublica.org/parler-capitol-videos/. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[7] See Michael J. Altman and Jerome Copulsky, "Introduction: A Religious, Yet Religiously Incoherent Event," *Uncivil Religion: January 6, 2021* website: https://uncivilreligion.org/home/introduction. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[8] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York, NY: Random House 1961), p.34.

[9] "Revelation Song," *Uncivil Religion: January 6, 2021* website: https://uncivilreligion.org/home/media/revelation-song. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[10] Kari Jobe, "Revelation Song," *Kari Jobe* (album), Integrity Media (2009). Jennie Lee Riddle, "Revelation Song," Gateway Create Publishing, 2004.

[11] See Genesis 2.7 and John 4.10-15.

[12] For the close affiliation between the traditional *Sanctus* of the Mass and the lyrics of the Riddle song, see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Texts for Order of Mass Settings": https://www.usccb.org/committees/divine-worship/policies/mass-settings-texts#tab--sanctus. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[13] Stephen Spielberg, dir., *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Paramount (1989).

[14] "Kneel down and you shall believe that you knelt down because of your belief; that is—your following the ritual is an expression/effect of your inner belief; in short, the external ritual performance generates its own ideological foundation." See Slavoj Žižek, "The Spectre of Ideology," in Elizabeth Wright and Edmund Wright, eds., *The Žižek Reader* (London: Blackwell, 1999), p.66. In this way, a common identity is reinforced at this moment. The gesture places a communal devotion to Jesus in a context that reaffirms Jesus' holiness (as the song enunciates), perhaps, but it also establishes, reinforces, or reaffirms the sense of common purpose and the ideological predispositions of the collective.

[15] "Ritual is not an expression of or a response to the sacred; rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual." Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1992), p.105.

[16] This timeline constructed with reference to Lauren Leatherby, Arielle Ray, Anjali Singhvi, Christiaan Triebert, Derek Watkins, and Haley Willis, "How a Presidential Rally Turned Into a Capitol Rampage," *New York Times* (12 January 2021): https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/01/12/us/capitol-mob-timeline.html. Accessed 1 August 2022. See also Shelly Tan, Youjin Shin, and Danielle Rindler, "How one of America's ugliest days unraveled inside and outside the Capitol," *Washington Post* (9 January 2021): https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2021/capitol-insurrection-visual-timeline/. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[17] "Worship Singing," *Uncivil Religion: January 6, 2021* website: https://uncivilreligion.org/home/media/gospel-music. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[18] direct quote from Psalm 18.

[19] suggestive of Exodus 14.14; replicated, post-circumcision, in Joshua 5.14—in Joshua, however, it is the commander of the army of the Lord who "fights the battle."

[20] possibly Psalm 110; or Psalm 68: "Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins..."

[21] For an elaboration of this point, see Theodore Louis Trost, "'Hooray for Our Side!': Songs, Identity Construction, and Sound Doctrine," *Religious Studies Review* 29/3 (July 2003): pp.215-223.

[22] Presumably, this is not the same serpent as the one who appears on the "Gadsden Flag" to symbolize the slogan "Don't Tread on Me."

[23] See "New Capitol riot video shows Patrick McCaughey, pro-Trump mob crushing DC Police Officer Daniel Hodges," WUSA9, Washington, DC: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmtL27dqz6w. Accessed 18 April 2022.

[24] "A Crowd of Worship Singers," *Uncivil Religion: January 6, 2021* website: https://uncivilreligion.org/home/singing-choir. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[25] Robert Gay (featuring Integrity's Hosanna! Music), "We are the People of the Lord," *Praise Worship: Victor's Crown*, Hosanna Music (1989). See also the video at: Robert Gay, "We are the People of the Lord": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLfXxt4dJ70. Accessed 18 April 2022.

[26] Suggested here is a conjoining of an image of the church militant, attributed to the apostle Paul (Eph 6.11), with the overall mandate for conquest that informs the book of Joshua.

[27] A version of this section of the essay first appeared on the *Uncivil Religion* website. See Theodore Louis Trost, "The Lion, the Crowd, and Amazing Grace," *Uncivil Religion, January 6, 2021* website: https://uncivilreligion.org/home/the-lion-the-crowd-and-amazing-grace. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[28] "Amazing Grace," *Uncivil Religion: January 6, 2021* website: https://uncivilreligion.org/home/media/amazing-grace. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[29] The Times of Israel Staff and Agencies, "US Capitol Rioters Chanted 'Hang Mike Pence'—Video Footage," 10 January 2021: https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-capitol-rioters-chanted-hang-mike-pence-video-footage/. Accessed 18 April 2022.

[30] Quoted in Jenna Johnson, "What difference does it make whether it's Mussolini?" *Washington Post*, 28 February 1986: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/02/28/trump-on-retweeting-questionable-quote-what-difference-does-it-make-whether-its-mussolini/. Accessed 18 April 2022.

[31] John Newton, "Amazing Grace," *The Church of Scotland Hymnary* #555 (Norfolk: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2005). Available online: https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/hymn/555-amazing-grace-how-sweet-the-sound. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[32] Amita Kelly, "Watch: President Obama Sings 'Amazing Grace' in Eulogy," 26 June 2015 [starting at 36:40]: https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/06/26/417839374/watch-president-obamas-eulogy-at-emanuel-ame-church. Accessed 18 April 2022. For further discussion of the role of gun violence in contemporary American society, see the companion essay, Theodore Louis Trost, "Notes on The Beatles' 'White Album' in the Year 2022," in *Enduring Violence in America: Two Essays* (Edinburgh: IASH, 2023).

[33] For a discussion of President Obama's rhetorical strategy, see Peter Manseau, "Obama's Graceful Pause in Charleston," *The Atlantic*, 30 June 2015:

https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/obamas-graceful-pause-in-charleston/397223/. Accessed 18 April 2022. For the text of "America the Beautiful," see Katharine Lee Bates, "America the Beautiful": https://americanliterature.com/author/katharine-lee-bates/poem/america-the-beautiful. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[34] "Full Text: Donald Trump 2016 RNC Draft Speech Transcript," *Politico*, 21 July 2016 (emphasis added). Available at http://politi.co/2ApcBDB. Accessed 18 April 2022.

[35] Samuel Francis Smith, "My Country 'Tis of Thee," Library of Congress Song Collection: https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200000012/. Accessed 1 August 2022.

[36] See James Melvin Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1986), pp.217-220.

Notes: *Notes on The Beatles' "White Album" in the Year 2022*

[1] Joan Didion, "The White Album," in Joan Didion, *The White Album* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1979), pp.11-48 [11]. A prolific journalist who wrote articles for numerous magazines and newspapers starting in the 1960s, Didion is best known as a practitioner of the "New Journalism." She incorporated literary techniques and first person narrative into her articles, some of which focused on the peculiarities of the emerging counter-culture in California and elsewhere—as exemplified in the collection *The White Album* and its predecessor volume, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1968).

[2] David Souden, *A Guide to Winchester Cathedral* (London: Pavilion, 2021), p.6.

[3] Didion, p. 11; p.36. The petal image, as quoted by Didion, is from the poem "In a Station of the Metro" (1913), by Ezra Pound: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=12675. Accessed 18 July 2022.

[4] Didion, p.23.

[5] The Grass Roots, "Midnight Confessions," Dunhill (1968); The Doors, "Break on Through (to the Other Side)," *The Doors*, Elektra (1967); The Doors, "Love Me Two Times," *Strange Days*, Elektra (1967); Glen Campbell, "Wichita Lineman," Capitol (1968); Gladys Knight and the Pips, "I Heard it Through the Grapevine," Soul (1967); Marvin Gaye, "I Heard it Through the Grapevine," Tamla (1968).

[6] The Beatles, *The Beatles* (also known as the "White Album"), Apple (1968).

[7] Chuck Berry, "Back in the USA," Chess (1957); The Beach Boys, "California Girls," Capitol (1965).

[8] Josh Peck and J. David Goodman, "Shooting at Elementary School Devastates Community in South Texas," *New York Times,* 24 May 2022; updated 16 June 2022: https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/24/us/shooting-robb-elementary-uvalde#shooting-texas-elementary-school. Accessed 31 July 2022.

[9] The Beatles, "Hey Jude" b/w "Revolution," Apple (1968).

[10] David Lister, "The Beatles' White Album at 50: Paul is dead, the Manson family murders and 'granny music s***.'" *The Independent,* 21 November 2018: https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/the-beatles-white-album-50th-anniversary-reissue-tracklist-john-lennon-paul-mccartney-a8644761.html. Accessed 8 June 2022. See also: "UK Album Release: The Beatles (White Album)." *The Beatles Bible*: https://www.beatlesbible.com/1968/11/22/uk-lp-the-beatles-white-album/. Accessed 8 June 2022.

[11] Jann S. Wenner, "Review: The Beatles' 'White Album'. Our take on the 1968 double album from the Fab Four," *Rolling Stone*, 21 December 1968: https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/review-the-beatles-white-album-186863/. Accessed 8 June 2022. For a summary of earlier assessments, see Geoffrey Cannon, "Back with the real Beatles: the White Album reviewed – archive, 1968," *The Guardian*, 9 November 2018: https://www.theguardian.com/music/from-the-archive-blog/2018/nov/09/beatles-white-album-review-november-1968. Accessed 8 June 2022.

[12] Rolling Stones, *Beggars Banquet*, London (1968).

[13] John Wiener, *Come Together: John Lennon in His Time* (Urbana, IL: Illinois University Press, 1991), pp.65-66. See also Jeffrey Roessner, "We All Want to Change the World: Postmodern Politics and the Beatles' White Album," in Ken Womack and Todd Davis, eds., Reading *the Beatles: Cultural Studies, Literary Criticism, and the Fab Four* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), p.149. Wiener and Roessner both cite the article by John Landau, "Rock 'n' Roll Radical?" *Liberation News Service* dispatch in *Daily World*, 22 February 1969. For Landau's assessment of the Rolling Stones' album *Beggars Banquet*, see Jon Landau, "Beggars Banquet," *Rolling Stone*, 4 January 1969: pp.10-13. Landau would subsequently produce the MC5 album *Back in the USA*, Atlantic (1969) to some derision, and Bruce Springsteen's albums, beginning with *Born to Run*, Columbia (1975) to wide acclaim.

[14] Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, "Dancing in the Streets," Hitsville USA (1964). Despite the seemingly benign nature of dancing in the streets, the radical implications of concerted direct action in the streets was picked up by leaders of the civil rights movement during the 1960s. See Jim Farber, "'We had been beat down a lot': the story behind 60s protest anthem Dancing in the Street," *The Guardian*, 1 July 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/jul/01/martha-reeves-dancing-in-the-street-motown-protest. Accessed 31 July 2022. The political implications of the Beatles' song "Why Don't We Do It in the Road?" from the "White Album," are explored in the book by John Astley, *Why Don't We Do It in the Road?: The Beatles Phenomenon* (London: The Company of Writers, 2006).

[15] The Beatles, "When I'm Sixty-Four," *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Capitol (1967); The New Vaudeville Band, "Winchester Cathedral," Fontana (1966).

[16] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York, NY: Scribners, 1925). For a story that parallels, or serves as paradigm for, the progress of "Honey Pie," consider the remarkable career of Elinor Glyn as described by Karen Randall and Alexis Weedon, "Atlantic Liners, It Girls and Old Europe in Elinor Glyn's Romantic Adventures," in Barbara Jane Brickman, Deborah Jermyn and Theodore Louis Trost, eds., *Love Across the Atlantic: US-UK Romance in Popular Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.19-37.

[17] Rocky thus joins the ranks of certain other legends of the silver screen. Consider "Sister Sharon Falconer" in Richard Brooks, dir., *Elmer Gantry*, United Artists (1960); or the charismatic preacher "Euliss F. 'Sonny' Dewey" in Robert Duvall, dir., *The Apostle*, October Films (1997).

[18] The development of Captain Marvel from his origin as a Fawcett Comics hero is catalogued at "Captain Marvel": http://www.internationalhero.co.uk/c/capmarv.htm. Accessed 8 June 2022. The story of Captain Marvel's emergence and eventual migration to DC Comics is recounted in Nathaniel Lee, "How a $4 million lawsuit created 'Shazam!' and 'Captain Marvel' as we know them today," *Business Insider*, 5 April 2019: https://www.businessinsider.com/lawsuit-captain-marvel-shazam-superman-comics-dc-superheroes-2019-4?r=US&IR=T#:~:text=In%20June%201941%2C%20National%20Comics,books%2C%20lasting%20over%2012%20years. Accessed 8 June 2022.

[19] For "Stand Your Ground," see "The 2022 Florida Statutes, Title 46, Chapter 776: Justifiable Use of Force" at *Online Sunshine: the Official Internet Site of the Florida Legislature*: http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0776/Sections/0776.013.html. Accessed 31 July 2022. See also Lizette Alvarez and Cara Buckley, "Zimmerman is Acquitted in Trayvon Martin Killing," *New York Times*, 14 July 2013: https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/14/us/george-zimmerman-verdict-trayvon-martin.html. Accessed 31 July 2022.

[20] Other popular songs of the era also took for granted gun violence. For example, Sonny and Cher, "Bang, Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)," Imperial (1966), which includes the lines "Bang, bang, he shot me down; bang, bang, I hit the ground"; and Jimi Hendrix's version of the Billy Roberts tune "Hey Joe," Reprise (1966), which represents homicide as a crime of passion. Asked where he is going with that gun in his hand, Joe responds: "I'm goin' down to shoot my old lady, you know I caught her messin' 'round with another man."

[21] Among Kennedy's final words were "Everything's going to be OK" and "Don't lift me." See "National Affairs: Bobby's Last, Longest Day," *Newsweek*, 17 June 1968: pp.29-30. The extended article on the Robert Kennedy assassination includes a brief essay entitled "Guns: Like Buying Cigarettes" [p.46].

[22] Steven Maginnis, "Miscellaneous Musings: 'The White Album 50 Project: Happiness Is a Warm Gun,'" 14 June 2018: http://stevenmaginnis.blogspot.com/2018/06/the-white-album-50-project-happiness-is-a-warm-gun.html. Accessed 8 June 2022.

This blog includes a photograph of the original article by Warren Herlihy from *The Rifleman*, May 1968: p.21. The Herlihy article is also reproduced in "The Paul McCartney Project: 'Happiness is a Warm Gun'": https://www.the-paulmccartney-project.com/song/happiness-is-a-warm-gun/. Accessed 8 June 2022.

[23] *Gun Violence Archive*, "Mass Shootings in 2022": https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/reports/mass-shooting?year=2022. Accessed 6 January 2023. As the year 2022 draws to a close, many other cities could be added to this list, including Houston and Phoenix (28 August), Cleveland (5 September), Baton Rouge (21 October), and Colorado Springs (19 November). For details, again see the *Gun Violence Archive*.

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