

A paean to a controversial teacher, mentor,  
and conservative cultural critic

# The Fusionist Mind of Stephen Tonsor

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Gleaves Whitney

The people who remember Stephen Tonsor nowadays tend to be not academics but movement conservatives.<sup>1</sup> What they recall is “the insult,” and they can tell you exactly where and when the University of Michigan historian served it up: in downtown Chicago, in a ballroom at the Drake Hotel, in 1986, at a Philadelphia Society meeting. Delivering prepared remarks to a mostly friendly audience of conservatives, Tonsor played the scold. It was time to put neoconservatives in their place. Embellishing a figure of speech uttered by an obscure U.S. senator,<sup>2</sup> the barrel-chested Tonsor let fly:

It is splendid when the town whore gets religion and joins the church. Now and then she makes a good choir director, but when she begins to tell the minister what he ought to say in his Sunday sermons, matters have been carried too far.<sup>3</sup>

What was behind Tonsor’s provocation? It was rooted, I believe, not just in his convictions but also in his insecurities. The dramatic rise of

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neoconservatives inside the movement and inside the Reagan administration had real consequences. Jobs were at stake. Status was at stake. The battle over ideas was at stake. By the mid-1980s, it was apparent that the neocons were capturing the big money in the foundations as well as the plum assignments in the Reagan administration—at the expense of some very fine traditionalists. So Tonsor fell back on his instincts: he attacked.

A combat veteran, Tonsor won three Bronze Stars in World War II. Now, in the battle over the fate of his tribe—a congeries of fusionists and traditionalists—he argued that the conservative movement was not to be confused with the Republican Party or Washington think tanks. The true roots of conservatism were not political, but cultural, extending back to ancient Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome. True conservatives, believing civilization was a fragile achievement, owed an incalculable debt to the stewardship of generations of Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics. These conservatives also gleaned lessons from the “dynamic stability” of early modern Britain and the “stable dynamism” of the American founding.

Against the backdrop of crises caused by the Great Depression, World War II, and the 1960s cultural revolution, a new generation of conservative fusionists and traditionalists coalesced around the work of Richard Weaver, Russell Kirk, Frank Meyer, Eric Voegelin, Thomas Molnar, and Peter Stanlis. Although he himself did not want to be labeled, Tonsor allied himself with these fusionists and traditionalists. They valued Catholicism’s role in the creation and development of Western civilization. They were wary of the impact of nominalism on modern philosophy, of the French Revolution on modern politics, and of the Industrial Revolution on modern society. The problem with the neocons is that they were not so committed to traditional culture. Mostly secular New York Jews, they were Nietzscheans in

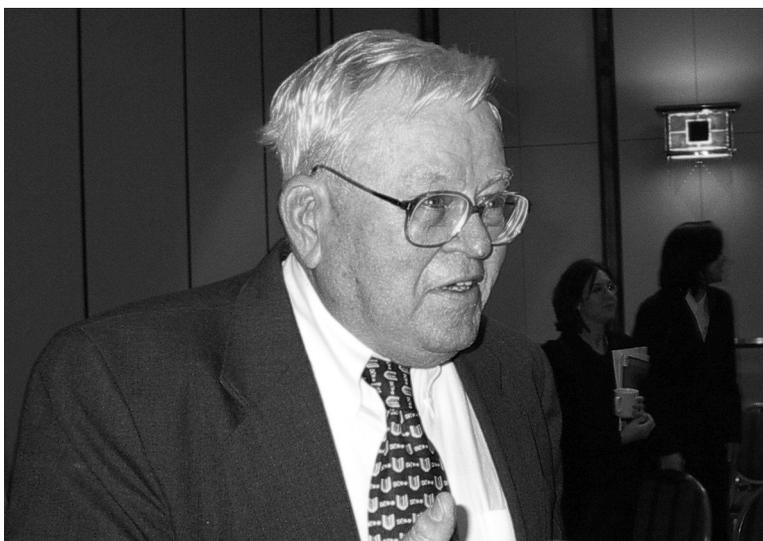
pursuit of power, thoroughgoing nihilists, modernists who had forgotten God.

Some Catholic traditionalists and fusionists responded gleefully to Tonsor’s put-down of the neocons; others, not so much. Before Tonsor delivered his remarks, his wife, Caroline, and his best friend, Henry Regnery, pleaded with him to soften the message.<sup>4</sup> It had the taint of anti-Semitism even though he was not anti-Semitic. They recalled his first love affair with a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany named Rose Epstein;<sup>5</sup> he always had feelings for her and remained in touch with her until death did them part. But the attendees in the room would not know about this love affair. They would fail to see that Tonsor’s attack against the neocons was not for being Jewish but rather for not being Jewish enough: the neocons had turned their backs on God.<sup>6</sup>

Tonsor was unmoved by Caroline’s and Henry’s pleading—and the rest, as they say, is history. Tonsor’s public reputation took a hit from which it never fully recovered. Yet it was a price he seemed willing to pay. He expressed no regrets when I asked him one year later about the speech. In fact, he proudly gave me a copy of his typewritten manuscript. The carefully calculated insult was textbook Tonsor. His fierce prejudices, probing intellect, and prickly personality combined to define a distinct intellectual style: always fortissimo, never pianissimo.

In addition to the notorious Drake Hotel speech, movement conservatives also recall Tonsor’s pique between 1981 and 1992, during the Reagan and Bush administrations. Rather than rejoice in the fact that at least one conservative had finally made it to the White House, Tonsor expressed dismay at how easily traditionalists were seduced by power. A depressed Tonsor intoned, “When conservative scholars trade in their tweed coats for blue suits and go to Washington, you know the end of the movement is near.”<sup>7</sup>

He was particularly perturbed by Wil-



*Tonsor believed an education that empowered students to negotiate the dialectic between unity and diversity helps shape “the civilized, educated, and rational man”*

liam J. Bennett’s contest with M. E. Bradford for the prize of running Reagan’s National Endowment for the Humanities. The eventual selection of Bennett, who had the backing of the neocons, and the rejection of Bradford, who had the backing of the Southern paleocons, triggered Tonsor’s outrage. It confirmed in his mind that the neocon Will to Power wins out over less well-funded and less well-connected traditionalists every time.

As telling as the fights over status are, there is so much more to recall about Stephen John Tonsor III than an insult here or a premonition there. Bookish conservatives know that one of his most enduring achievements is found in the scores of elegant, erudite essays that he produced for journals such as this one, as well as *Intercollegiate Review*, *National Review*, and *First Things*.<sup>8</sup>

Tonsor’s sparkling essays compare favorably with those composed by the giants of the genre—Trilling, Orwell, Arnold. They certainly stand in stark contrast to the dull monographs he produced. The essays read as though one were hiking up a winding mountain trail that rewards the reader with com-

manding views. The monographs proceed as though one were riveting together parts on an assembly line, in a factory that generated units of knowledge with industrial efficiency.

In the early essays especially, Tonsor’s brilliance shines. Many of them grew organically out of the lectures he delivered to his students at Michigan. During a typical academic year, Tonsor would deliver up to 150 talks—in his Western civilization survey, in his “History of History” class, and in two advanced courses in modern European intellectual history. In addition, he led graduate seminars on special topics such as the idea of decadence. Over a period of forty years, a biblically suggestive span, Tonsor’s fierce intellect attracted serious students to his classes. He cultivated a cadre of loyal young scholars who treasured him as a teacher and mentor. They fondly remember him long after leaving Michigan and credit him with changing their lives for the better. They also recall that their professor could be demanding, confrontational, and feisty.

Full disclosure: Tonsor served as my graduate adviser for five years. I experienced firsthand his generosity as a mentor and his

brilliance as an intellectual historian and cultural critic. More, he was my godfather when I was received into the Catholic Church. On occasion, however, I experienced another side of his personality that would cause me no end of grief, more about which below.

What are some of the important things that students learned from Tonsor? Since his passing in 2014, I have asked that question to a score of Michigan alumni who studied under him as undergraduate or graduate students. Their answers are revealing. Except for the perceived injustice of it, they could not care less that Tonsor is relatively unknown in academic circles today, or that he is not the most cited academic they ever had. What they do care about is the personal connection with him. They felt that studying with him was a privilege and an adventure. Under his tutelage they caught something—the nobility of the life of the mind, the romance of discovery, the fight for truth. They learned that to dedicate one’s life to humane learning is not a job but a calling. That to fulfill that calling is not for the faint of heart but for those with focus and discipline. That the liberal arts are not easy but hard—really hard—often requiring years of dogged study. That the imagination is not just helpful to inquiry but essential to pouring old wine into new wineskins. That in what we today call a STEM world, divergent thinking is even more important than convergent thinking if modern civilization is to preserve the dignity of the human person. That in a society with many pressing needs, to pursue truth, goodness, and beauty for their own sake is not a diversion but a privilege. That religion and myth are keys to historical meaning. That history is not a science but a humane discipline that embraces all the messiness of life and the many conflicting ways it might be interpreted. That to understand a cultural problem often requires not just training in history but also inquiry into religion, art, music, literature, architecture, philosophy,

and philology. That to express a thought well is not just ornamental but essential in a pluralistic society with a short attention span.

I would be remiss not to mention a tradition that a number of Tonsor’s students remember and cherish. Our professor was well known for approaching a student after the late-morning intellectual-history class. He would invite the student to accompany him on the twenty-minute walk home to have a glass of sherry and enjoy a hot lunch prepared by his wife, Caroline. It mattered not what the student’s political views were: one of the founders of Students for a Democratic Society, Tom Hayden, enjoyed the tradition. Stephen and Caroline Tonsor had been married since 1949, and the modest house they kept in the cozy neighborhood of Burns Park was a welcome respite for young people shoehorned into student housing or a studio apartment. Indeed, for Tonsor’s students, these midday jaunts were one of the highlights of a Michigan education. They invited illuminating conversation on the walk to and from 1505 Morton Avenue. Once in the house, Tonsor would invite the student to look at the flower arrangement from his garden or to pour over his latest exhibit catalogues. In the background, the university’s NPR station played classical music. Once Caroline announced that lunch was served, everyone would sit down and Tonsor would offer a blessing under a Bavarian crucifix. With Caroline present, the conversation often took a more relaxed turn and people would speak of their families, hometowns, holiday traditions, and weekend outings. It was truly lovely, an oasis of civility. To this day, the Michigan alumni who were fortunate to be welcomed into the Tonsors’ home speak warmly of these unforgettable occasions.<sup>9</sup>

Tonsor’s brilliance was evident both in conversation and writing. If he was intimidating, it was because his mind managed to hold, in dynamic tension, the

thought of an exceedingly diverse stable of authors in his head—from the philosophy of Aristotle to the poetry of Goethe to the history of Lord Acton.

When I was preparing to move to Ann Arbor and study under Tonsor's direction, I discovered the method and metaphysic he had developed by the mid-1960s. He called it "the organic reconciliation of opposites."<sup>10</sup> It was shorthand for how he approached inquiry, ordered understanding, and developed rhetorical strategies. The concept seemed to run like a golden thread through many of the essays he produced.

If the concept of the organic reconciliation of opposites needed an introduction, Tonsor would look to political philosophy and especially to the founder of fusionism, Frank Meyer. Tonsor regarded Meyer as a mentor.<sup>11</sup> They spent countless hours on the phone in the 1960s—always, alas, at dinner-time, to the consternation of Caroline. Meyer endeavored to find common ground among diverse schools of conservative thought. He could do so because, as Tonsor wrote, he "is a great debater [who] has first debated with himself every idea which he publicly defends or opposes. He is such a worthy combatant because every issue which he confronts publicly has first been fought out as a civil war with himself." Meyer saw that these interior battles were reflected in the movement's external battles, especially those between libertarians and Catholic traditionalists. Freedom stripped of order led to anarchy and licentiousness. Order stripped of freedom led to clerical fascism. Meyer thus tried to bring harmony to conservatism "by insisting that freedom and order, innovation and tradition, are not irreconcilable antitheses." Rather, they needed each other in a humane polity, and they could be yoked in an act of fusion that would build a movement.<sup>12</sup>

If the organic reconciliation of opposites needed grounding in psychology, Tonsor would point to Walt Whitman: "Do I con-

tradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes." Tonsor acknowledged his debt to "the Romantic appreciation of the dialectic of opposites and polarities." When he studied poetry at the University of Illinois as an undergraduate, he steeped himself in the sensibilities of Whitman and the Romantics because it was they who

expressed eloquently and frequently the profound observation that the essence of life is polarity, opposition, contradiction; and that these—when integrated, harmonized, synthesized, their warring forces harnessed by the sovereign personality, institution, or society—enrich and energize the larger context of which they are a part.<sup>13</sup>

If the organic reconciliation of opposites needed to be unpacked in philosophical terms, Tonsor would point to the polarities that demark our lives—sacred and secular, transcendence and immanence, faith and reason, Jerusalem and Athens, Christian and pagan, church and state, eternity and time, infinity and space, absolute and relative, permanent things and historicism, philosophical truth and historical contingency, classic and modern, Enlightenment and Romantic, liberty and equality. Already in his 1958 review essay about the British Catholic historian Christopher Dawson, Tonsor was staking out the polarities to be harmonized.<sup>14</sup>

If the organic reconciliation of opposites was in search of case studies, Tonsor would point to the great thinkers who set out to mediate the polarities. In the Age of Heroes, it was Homer mediating between the humanizing traditions of home and the existential tests from abroad. In classical Greece, it was Plato mediating between Parmenides's absolute and Heraclitus's relative. In medieval Europe, it was Thomas Aquinas mediating between the reason of Athens and the faith of

Jerusalem. In the eighteenth century, it was Madison mediating between the Lockean liberal and Ciceronian republican traditions. In the nineteenth century, it was Goethe mediating between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. In the twentieth century, it was Dawson mediating between two forms of modern extravagance, that of the spiritual Baroque and that of the material Bourgeois. No matter how capable the workers in the vineyard are, the work of mediation is never finished. As Tonsor noted, “These principles are ever held in precarious balance by individuals and by societies; the resolution of their forces is never final; their synthesis is never complete.”<sup>15</sup> Note that it would be a gross misunderstanding to conflate Tonsor’s idea of the organic reconciliation of opposites with anything resembling Hegel’s dialectic. Even to suggest such a thing would draw Tonsor’s swift ire, as I discovered during one of his office hours!

If the organic reconciliation of opposites needed to be translated into a philosophy of civilization, Tonsor would observe that modern man lives with tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions—oppositions that arise from our civilization’s conflicting sources of intellectual and moral authority. In our shorthand way, we call those conflicting sources Christendom, Enlightenment, and Romanticism. These three civilizational sources have a complex and overlapping relationship to one another, something like that of a parent to strong-willed children. They are continually clashing, continually generating conflicting ideas and discourse in our public affairs. As a result, the conservative must be discerning. For he believes in freedom as well as in order. He believes in the individual as well as in the community. He believes in the equality of all as well as in hierarchy, natural aristocracy, and excellence. He believes in private enterprise, competition, and market mechanisms as well as in those human, moral, and cultural values

that cannot be quantified by the competition of interests in the marketplace.<sup>16</sup>

If the organic reconciliation of opposites were applied to higher education, Tonsor would point to the challenge of the denominational Christian college preserving its mission in a secularizing society. His passionately delivered speech at Augsburg University in 1969 explored the tension between civilizational unity and educational diversity. Recall he was a Roman Catholic delivering the keynote at a Norwegian Lutheran college that was celebrating its one hundredth anniversary:

Those who consciously or unconsciously seek to purchase unity at the price of individuality and diversity contradict one of the most pervasive tendencies in our experience. We are able to be one effectively because we have been many individually. Our differences and our distinctions in this ecumenical world are not sources of weakness and anarchy but are the very basis out of which a rich and harmonious unity can develop.

This process of diversification within a larger unity has been one of the distinguishing characteristics of our whole civilization. No other civilization has possessed the essential unity and the fascinating multiplicity characteristic of western society. Christianity has divided and subdivided, each branch emphasizing in some distinctive way an important aspect of a common belief. Our political institutions have been structured in such a way that pluralism has been given concrete expression in our society. And our public lives are characterized by debate and constant, even acrimonious, discussion of alternative solutions to our problems. Our experience with diversity of belief and practice has led us to recognize that alternative lifestyles, alternative political solutions, alternative social institutions, and

most especially, alternative educational programs are a major source of strength, stability, and richness in our society.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, Tonsor declared, an education that empowers students to negotiate the dialectic between unity and diversity helps shape “the civilized, educated, and rational man.”<sup>18</sup>

If the organic reconciliation of opposites needed a method, Tonsor would point to one of the most civilized, educated, and rational men he had studied, Lord Acton. This great Catholic historian counseled students to know their opponents’ thinking better than the opponents did. Keep an open mind. Test beliefs against reality. Cross-examine the evidence. Your opponent just might know something you don’t and teach you something of value.<sup>19</sup> To illustrate, Tonsor would point to Acton’s willingness to revisit the evidence and soften his initial hostility to the French Revolution.<sup>20</sup> A related piece of advice from Acton to students was to be both-and, not either-or, thinkers. In the nineteenth century, the number of accessible archives in Europe and the United States multiplied. It was the golden age of history. For the first time, scholars could travel to distant archives with relative ease and explore different perspectives of the same events in a systematic way. So Tonsor counseled apprentice historians to make the pilgrimage to the archives, explore them imaginatively, mine them thoughtfully, and expand the horizon of credible interpretations. It is hard work, but there is no shortcut to understanding the past as it actually happened, *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Tonsor warned: “Only silly men write quickies.”<sup>21</sup>

If the organic reconciliation of opposites needed a moral imperative in our day, Tonsor would insist that truth matters—and it often hurts. He would look again to his hero, Lord Acton, who urged students to have the courage to follow the evidence wherever it leads, no matter who might be offended,

no matter what the cost. To illustrate, Tonsor would point to Lord Acton’s mentor, Ignaz von Döllinger, about whom Tonsor had written his dissertation. Döllinger was a Catholic priest and scholar. Discovering material in the archives that was unpopular with the majority of the hierarchy in Rome, he paid dearly for rejecting the dogma of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council: the penalty for his independence of mind was excommunication. Döllinger valued his integrity as a historian more than his standing as a priest.<sup>22</sup>

As this golden thread running through Tonsor’s early work shows, the Michigan historian belonged to a great tradition in the West, that of the Christian humanist who accepted the Herculean if not Sisyphean task of trying to reconcile opposites. Given that human beings’ aspirations are framed by limitations, there will always be a dynamic tension between God and man, faith and reason, the absolute and relative, the universal and the particular, unity and diversity, Jerusalem and Athens, liberty and order. The work is never finished. Yet to strive for reconciliation is ennobling: “My behavior,” Tonsor confessed, “would be less honorable and my world more impoverished were I to abandon any one of these contradictory ideals.”<sup>23</sup>

Stephen Tonsor lived from 1923 till 2014, a tumultuous period of Depression, world war, and Cold War that abundantly illustrates what happens when opposites go unreconciled. Perhaps his career as an intellectual historian and cultural critic was inspired, in part, by the widespread human misery he witnessed. Due to limited space, I can give only a few biographical highlights, but they are richly suggestive of the link between his life and times.

Interviews with the people who knew him intimately, as well as research in several archives, paint a discordant picture of

Tonsor's interior life, where he waged his own fierce struggle to reconcile opposites. Like all of us, he was a mare's nest of contradictions. At his best, he was the happy warrior who could go to campus and spar for hours with the New Left as they threw SDS slogans in his face. Then he'd come home to the joy of laboring in his two gardens, or of hiking with Caroline and the four children in the forested moraines around Ann Arbor. He loved the traditions surrounding holidays with family, and made much of them, especially around Christmas and the Epiphany, which the Tonsors celebrated each year with a spirited party.<sup>24</sup>

Yet Tonsor was also tormented by a dark side that filled him with resentments and pessimism. He experienced much hardship as a boy. The oldest of seven children, he grew up in and around Jerseyville, Illinois, in the Great Depression, in a family that was working class and poor. One of his brothers, Bernard Tonsor, explained that the family had to move so many times "because Mom and Dad could not pay the grocer." There were other times when, to get to school on snowy winter mornings, young Stephen either had to walk barefoot or suffer the humiliation of wearing his mother's shoes so as not to get frostbite.<sup>25</sup> For the rest of his life, Tonsor struggled to reconcile his attachments to Jerseyville with his blessed escape from its confinements.

Tonsor grew up in a family that loved the routines and rituals of the Catholic Church. He enthusiastically shared in the faith of his fathers; it kept him close to his German heritage and to his God. But at an early age, he became aware of how a beautiful thing can become polluted. A pedophile priest assigned to the parish made Tonsor angry forever after. "That son of a bitch should have rotted in prison," he would say.<sup>26</sup>

Most conservative Catholics who knew Tonsor probably assumed that he embraced the doctrines of their church. Actually, his

letters reveal quite an independent parishioner. His independence is of a piece with his admiration for Tocqueville, Döllinger, and Acton, all of whom had a problematic relationship with Rome. While Tonsor was conservative in his aesthetics, and while he was loathe to hear any left-wing homilies from the pulpit, he was quite liberal in the reforms he advocated. It began with his anger at the bishops: from the start, they should have adopted a policy of zero-tolerance for pedophiles and for the church leaders who abetted them. He also maintained that he could find nothing theologically wrong with allowing priests to marry and admitting women into the clergy.<sup>27</sup>

Tonsor's letters to Henry Regnery and my interviews with his widow, Caroline, reveal that he suffered from severe bouts of depression most of his life. A letter to Joseph Amato and an interview with his sister Mary Jean describe his first crushing disappointment in life. When he was a high schooler preparing for the priesthood, he was rejected by the seminary at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington, Ohio, after the campus interview. Tonsor was quite open about the reason for the rejection: he struggled with his sexuality.<sup>28</sup>

The year 1940 found Tonsor entering a school associated with the Presbyterian Church, Blackburn College, in Carlinville, Illinois. There he struggled with the war that had broken out in Europe. He thought seriously about declaring himself a conscientious objector because he did not want to fight Germans, but then he reconciled himself to being drafted after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He would be part of the Army Signal Corps, rise to the rank of staff sergeant, and earn three Bronze Stars in General MacArthur's campaign to retake the Philippines.<sup>29</sup>

Also in his freshman year at Blackburn, Tonsor fell in love for the first time. As noted above, her name was Rose, and she was a

Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany. Alas, her father, Fritz Epstein, did not want his daughter to marry a Catholic. But he and Rose formed a close attachment. Even after he married Caroline (1949), whom he dearly loved, he always found a way to visit Rose in her adopted hometown of Boston. In fact, it was on one of these visits that he first heard Christopher Dawson lecture;<sup>30</sup> the great British historian briefly held a chair at the Harvard Divinity School (1958–62).

One should never forget where Tonsor came from. He was eighteen when he was ripped from his home in the Corn Belt to fight in a distant war. He was twenty-two when he came back to the Midwest, a combat veteran hardened but eager to resume his studies. Some of the people close to him have speculated that his experience of combat in the Pacific and his exposure to a pedophile priest in his parish caused emotional distress or even traumatic injury to his brain. This is speculation—I have found nothing in the archives to confirm such a diagnosis—and the circumstantial evidence is inconclusive.<sup>31</sup> But awareness of the hardships Stephen Tonsor suffered surely softens any harsh judgments one is tempted to make about the man.

Before ever meeting him, I read Tonsor's early essays, written in the 1950s and 1960s, and they drew me into his mind. After arriving in Ann Arbor, I was slow to discover that he was changing his mind. In letters to Henry Regnery in the 1980s, he often complained of being depressed and tired.<sup>32</sup> Life was increasingly difficult for him. He was in the seventh decade of his earthly pilgrimage and his views were hardening. Maybe his youthful quest to seek the organic reconciliation of opposites had lost its luster. Maybe

he had soured on the contemporary scene in the conservative movement, the Republican Party, and the Catholic Church. Maybe the Drake Hotel speech signaled that his muscular intellect was beginning to ossify. By and by, his conversation would veer in a predictable direction—more paleo and less neo, more unity and less diversity, more authority and less freedom. Tonsor was drifting away from the organic reconciliation of opposites that he had found so compelling as a young man, and I got the memo late. I was assuming one thing; he was saying another. Our diverging perspectives became the source of disagreements. He did not like being challenged. He seemed jealous that I was driving up to Mecosta and becoming closer to Russell Kirk. It didn't help when one day I put on a blue suit and went to the capital city to work with Michigan's new governor, John Engler. Tonsor would never invite me over for lunch again.

Thankfully, that's not the end of the story. More than two decades later, the Tonsors' oldest daughter, Ann, invited me to his memorial Mass. The date was June 26, 2014. The place was St. Mary's Catholic Church on the road west out of Jerseyville. I was the only one outside the family in attendance. It meant the world to me to reestablish a connection with Caroline, Ann, and the rest of the family after so many years.

Stephen Tonsor was a difficult personality, no doubt about it. We had differences that our similarities could not overcome. But he formed my mind and spirit for the better, and I will always honor him as a mentor. I still call him my godfather and *Doktorvater*. Not a day goes by when I do not think of him. Welcome to my challenge—reconciling opposites. 📖

NOTES

- 1 Many learned readers kindly offered their critiques of this article when it was in draft form. My heartfelt thanks to Dr. Bradley Birzer, Mr. Winston Elliott, Mrs. Annette Kirk, Dr. George Nash, Dr. Jeffrey Nelson, Dr. Gregory Schneider, Dr. Antony Thrall Sullivan, and Ann Tonsor Zeddies for the time they put into making my work better.
- 2 The source of this figure of speech is apparently Indiana senator James Watson, who refused to endorse the 1940 Republican candidate for president, Wendell Willkie, because Willkie was a former Democrat. Watson said: "I may welcome a repentant sinner into my church, but I wouldn't want him to lead the church choir." See [https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/People\\_Leaders\\_Watson.htm](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/People_Leaders_Watson.htm), accessed November 26, 2018.
- 3 For the text of the talk, see Stephen J. Tonsor, "Why I Too Am Not a Neoconservative," in *Conservatism in America since 1930: A Reader*, ed. Gregory L. Schneider (New York: NYU Press, 2003), 373–78.
- 4 Caroline Tonsor, occasional interviews with author, Chelsea, MI, July 2014–August 2018.
- 5 Stephen J. Tonsor, "Why I Am a Conservative," *Modern Age* 49, no. 3 (Summer 2007), <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=186&theme=home&loc=b>, accessed November 26, 2018.
- 6 Tonsor's papers, in the Hoover Institution Archives, contain a fascinating, if angry, letter exchange between Tonsor and Werner Dannhauser. It rolled out between April and June 1986, in response to Tonsor's Philadelphia Society speech. In the exchange, Tonsor indicted the neoconservative Dannhauser, a scholar of Nietzsche, for not being Jewish enough.
- 7 Tonsor used this line repeatedly when I worked with him in the 1980s. See also the formulation in his essay "The Haunted House of the Human Spirit," *Modern Age* 29, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 292.
- 8 A number of Tonsor's best essays are in Gregory L. Schneider, *Equality, Decadence, and Modernity: The Collected Essays of Stephen J. Tonsor* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2005). Tonsor's earlier essays are in *Tradition and Reform in Education* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974).
- 9 For more descriptions of these special times with the Tonsors, see Gleaves Whitney, *History Gadfly* blog, starting with <http://gleaveswhitney.blogspot.com/search?q=Tonsor+part+4>, accessed November 26, 2018.
- 10 Stephen J. Tonsor, "The Conservative Search for Identity," in *What Is Conservatism?*, rev. ed., ed. Frank S. Meyer (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2015), 2nd para.
- 11 Tonsor, "Why I Am a Conservative."
- 12 Stephen J. Tonsor, "The Drift to Starboard," *Modern Age* 13, no. 3 (Summer 1969): 330.
- 13 Tonsor, "Conservative Search for Identity," first paragraphs.
- 14 Stephen J. Tonsor, "History and the God of the Second Chance," *Modern Age* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1958): 199–201.
- 15 Tonsor, "Conservative Search for Identity," para. 3.
- 16 Stephen J. Tonsor, "Why I Am a Republican and a Conservative," in *Equality, Decadence, and Modernity*, 235.
- 17 To hear Tonsor's speech, "The Church-Related College," delivered at Augsburg University, October 15, 1969, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-PQ7DIHVUk>, accessed November 26, 2018.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Stephen J. Tonsor, remarks to the National Association of Manufacturers, Orlando, FL, April 1969. Draft manuscript copy in the Stephen J. Tonsor papers, Blackburn College Archives, Carlinville, IL.
- 20 Stephen J. Tonsor, foreword to *Lectures on the French Revolution*, by John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), loc. 47, Kindle.
- 21 Tonsor to author, office hours, 1988.
- 22 Stephen J. Tonsor, "Ignaz von Döllinger: A Study in Catholic Historicism" (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 1955), chap. 1; Stephen J. Tonsor, "Ignaz von Döllinger: Lord Acton's Mentor," *Anglican Theological Review* 41, no. 2 (1959): 211–15; Stephen J. Tonsor, "Lord Acton on Döllinger's Historical Theology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 3 (1959): 329–52.
- 23 Tonsor, "Why I Am a Republican and a Conservative," 235.
- 24 Ann Tonsor Zeddies, occasional interviews with author, 2014–18.
- 25 Bernard Tonsor, interviews with author, Jerseyville, IL, July 2014 and June 2015.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Tonsor to Joseph A. Amato, 2001, in Amato Papers, University of Minnesota Archives.
- 28 Caroline Tonsor, interviews with author; Joseph A. Amato, interviews with author, Grand Rapids, MI, May 2015; Mary Jean Jarvis, interviews with author, Jacksonville, IL, June 2015; Stephen J. Tonsor, letter to Joseph A. Amato, Amato Papers, University of Minnesota Archives.
- 29 Bernard Tonsor, interviews with author.
- 30 Tonsor, "Why I Am a Conservative"; Caroline Tonsor, interviews with author.
- 31 Ann Tonsor Zeddies, occasional interviews with author, Grand Rapids, MI, 2014–18.
- 32 I am in possession of hundreds of pages of Tonsor's letters to Henry Regnery from the 1970s to the mid-1990s, thanks to the generosity of Alfred Regnery.