

From Rome to Zurich, between Ignatius and Vermigli

Essays in Honor of John Patrick Donnelly, SJ

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BRILL

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An Irish-American Jesuit in the Madison Mafia

A. Lynn Martin

I first met Pat Donnelly in September, 1967, at a reception hosted by the University of Wisconsin's Department of History for its graduate students. Donnelly and I were two of many, some five hundred according to the scuttlebutt circulating among the students. To reinforce the point, that is five hundred graduate students in *history*. When I received my PhD in 1971, I was one of 55 PhDs awarded by the Department of History, down from 72 the previous year. The world-wide glut of historians that existed towards the end of the twentieth century was to a certain extent, perhaps a great extent, caused by the University of Wisconsin's Department of History, whose alumni left Madison and colonized colleges and universities around the world, forming an academic coterie known as the Madison Mafia. The first person I heard use that phrase was Giorgio Spini, the (appropriately) Italian historian; when I told him that I was a student of Robert Kingdon, he enthused, "So, you are a member of the Madison Mafia!"

Donnelly was also a student of Kingdon, who contributed to the glut of historians by accepting a half dozen new graduate students into his research seminar on Reformation Europe every year and supervising over 35 PhD's during his career.¹ The cohort of the late 1960s included some who would become leading scholars of the Reformation (and hence supervisors of yet more PhD's): Fred Baumgartner, Jerry Friedman, Hans Gustafson, Maryanne Cline Horowitz, Bob Kolb, Ray Mentzer, Luther Peterson, Bob Richgels, Donnelly, and me. Kingdon's research interest in Calvinism reflected his background, for his grandfather was a Presbyterian missionary in Korea, but the religious affiliation of those students and their research interests had an admirably anarchic mix: three Lutherans who included two pastors, two Jews who included one son of a rabbi, four Catholics who included one Jesuit priest, and I, an agnostic raised as a Methodist. Our research topics were just as varied, as illustrated by Donnelly's dissertation on Peter Martyr Vermigli, the Italian Protestant, and mine on French Jesuits. Kingdon's students socialized together but the closeness of the group was often under challenge from personal animosities and the

¹ For Kingdon as a graduate supervisor see the Introduction to *History Has Many Voices*, ed. Lee Palmer Wandel, (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2003), 1–6.

competitive nature of graduate work, especially in Kingdon's seminars. Documenting this and other aspects of the relationship between Kingdon and his students, their relationship with each other, and the experience of graduate students at the University of Wisconsin during this period is the collection of letters I edited, entitled *The Madison Mafia: Letters from Robert Kingdon and His Graduate Students (and Some of Their Wives)*, 1968–1970. Attempts to find a publisher for the letters were unsuccessful, but they form the basis for much of what follows.

Kingdon came to the University of Wisconsin in 1966, the same year that I arrived. Donnelly started one year later. He socialized with the rest of us, and we all called him Father Pat, but several things set him apart from the typical graduate student. First and most obvious was his membership in the Society of Jesus, but we found that he enjoyed his beer (as befitted someone born in Milwaukee), he was a keen spectator of sports, particularly football and basketball, and he appreciated playing a game of basketball and a round of golf. In later life he wrote an article entitled "Golf as a Spiritual Exercise."² Second was his age; at 34 he was older than the rest of us, except perhaps for Hans Gustafson. Third was his residence, for he lived with other Jesuits in a house at 625 Langdon St. near the Memorial Library. This unique situation had its advantages and disadvantages. Not only was he close to the library and the student union, he also just needed to cross the street to play a game of basketball at the University's Armory. On the other hand, the proximity to campus increased the likelihood of unwanted and surprise visitors, especially when he worked as a teaching assistant. During one of the battles between radical students and the police, the unlucky Luther Peterson encountered a canister of tear gas on his way to a seminar in the library; his clothes so reeked of the gas that it affected everyone in the room, so Donnelly suggested that he go next door to the Jesuit house to shower and find some other clothes. Fourth was his surprising wealth; he had inherited \$100,000 from his father's estate, an enormous amount of money at the time, ten times the starting salary of a university professor. Despite this wealth, he was one of the most frugal people I have ever known, so much so that his frugality is the subject of jokes among Jesuits. His intentions were to use his inheritance to support his mother, who had been divorced from his father.³ Fifth and final was his academic brilliance. Kingdon

² Available as a download at http://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=hist_fac (accessed 19 February 2015).

³ John Patrick Donnelly, "The Early Life Of John Patrick Donnelly, s.J. Memoir of Jesuit professor born in 1934, relating family history, his education, and his decision to become a Jesuit,"

relied on his theological expertise, and I was in awe of his Latin (he once wrote a letter to me in Latin), and we all were amazed at the reaction of Prof. William Sachse to an essay on the English theologian Richard Hooker (1554–1600) that Donnelly submitted in his course on Tudor and Stuart England. He suggested that Donnelly publish it.

The structure of the graduate program required two coursework units plus attendance at the supervisor's seminar in first year and then the submission of a thesis in order to complete a master's degree. The coursework and seminar requirements were the same in the second year, at the end of which students took their preliminary examinations, or prelims, on four subject areas of their major field. In the meantime students had to demonstrate competence in two foreign languages. In other words, students had to complete two years of coursework and a thesis, pass their preliminary examinations, and demonstrate linguistic proficiency before they could commence work on their PhD dissertation. Ideally, students spent their third year researching their topic and the fourth writing the dissertation and completing the coursework on their minor field. At the end of the 1967–68 academic year, I had successfully completed the first two years and was ready to go first to St. Louis for the Summer Institute of the Foundation for Reformation Research and then to Rome for a year of research in the Jesuit and Vatican Archives. While away I exchanged correspondence with my peers and my supervisor, the letters which became *The Madison Mafia*. Before my wife, Noreen, and I departed from Madison, all Kingdon's graduate students and their partners gathered for a picnic followed by a softball game. Kingdon was the umpire.

While Noreen and I spent the first part of the summer in St. Louis and then settled into Rome, Donnelly spent the summer, as he wrote, "swimming, playing basketball, drinking wine, and watching TV," but primarily preparing for his preliminary examinations, which he planned to take in November, six months earlier than required. Come October, he was wishing he had spent more time during the summer studying for the exams, because he now was taking a full course load as well as working as a teaching assistant in Kingdon's course on the Reformation. Nonetheless, an entirely unexpected development would have worse effects on his preparation, as he wrote on 27 October:

at the Children in Urban America Project website, <http://www.mu.edu/cgi-bin/cuap/db.cgi?db=default&uid=default&view=1&db=default&uid=default&Content=curriculum&ww=on&bool=and&sb=&CatAbbrev=---&Neighborhood=---&Decade=---&nh=237&mh=1> (accessed 19 February 2015). It's probably easier to google John Patrick Donnelly to find this document!

What has really consumed my psychic energy as well as time and hurt my preparation for prelims has been campus politics. Let me explain: This summer a group of about thirty students in the history department, both graduate and undergraduate students, all of them self proclaimed radicals and most Marxists of one shade or another, organized the History Students Association (HSA). Its purpose was to revamp the curriculum and teaching method of the history department, also the power structure. HSA demand equal voting rights in all department committees (one student for each professor) and invaded several meetings, sometimes refusing to leave. They also got out a booklet with a lengthy critique of the department. Capturing power in the department was only a step to capturing power in the university, then on to revolutionize society. Much of their program was sheer nonsense, but much very intelligent. The first week of class, the department called a meeting to discuss the situation—about 200 graduate students, maybe fifty undergraduates and virtually all the faculty showed up. No punches were pulled by either side. It became apparent that many students—I was one who talked up—thought that there were plenty of reforms needed, but that the HSA had no right to talk for all students. Many thought that practical reforms could better be achieved by a professional type organization of history students without the further commitment of revolutionizing society and without all the Marxist ideological baggage. The University is already under heavy assault on Capital Hill, talk and bills to abolish the board of regents and bring the University more directly under the Governor's thumb. Further student meetings determined that the founding fathers of HSA were determined that it must not loose [sic] its radical identity or integrity to reformist liberals like me. The moderates had no choice but to withdraw, form an organization, formulate a platform, and nominate three graduate and three undergraduate students to the department's joint student-faculty committees which will discuss reforms. The new organization, History Students for Reform (HSR), nominated me at a meeting I did not attend as one candidate. I accepted with some reluctance—I don't have the time, and priests should stay out of politics. But I was convinced that unless somebody stood up and offered an alternative to the radicals, the University of Wisconsin was headed on a collision course which would result in another Columbia. The election campaign followed—handing out broadsheets in history classes, placing ads in the *Cardinal* [the student newspaper], getting propaganda on the radio, putting up placards. HSA (bad guys) put out a 14 page newsletter—one paragraph of which attacked and misquoted me. I have had interviews with the *Cardinal*,

both Madison papers, the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Newsweek* magazine. Results—we took 5 of 6 seats in a close election—my 189 was tops, but a change of fifteen votes would have put in a solid HSA slate. The worst feature of the situation is that now we have to produce on our campaign promises—also the faculty representatives include Kingdon, [Theodore] Hamerow, and [Domenico] Sella—all of whom will be grading my prelims. I will have to fight RMK [Kingdon] eyeball to eyeball for more student power.⁴

Kingdon had previously sent me a much shortened version of these events; he made no judgements about Donnelly's involvement but obviously wished that he could extricate himself from the committee: "At this point I envy you the quiet of the archives." In the meantime in Rome I was discovering that the archives were not such a serene environment; despite lessons in paleography I had enormous difficulties deciphering the letters that were supposed to provide the information for my dissertation, and I consequently realized that I would need another year in Rome to come to terms with them. As the day of the prelims approached, Donnelly, as the newly elected chairman of the joint student-faculty committee, rather than studying, found himself reading material on the abolition of the grading system. Two other students of Kingdon had also been preparing to take the prelims, Jerry Friedman and Hans Gustafson, a Lutheran pastor, both of whom had been able to focus on the preparation for the past five months. Friedman's wife, Buffy, echoed his tendency for bombastic exaggeration when she reported in October that he was disgusted with the entire process, had become a lunatic, and did not smile any more. Her smiling husband wrote after the exams to report that he was confident he had passed.

About the others. Pat feels confident that he passed too, and judging from the questions that he answered I don't see how he could have failed. He was in a pretty tough situation though. Up till about 3 weeks before prelims he was involved with elections to a history department students council. After that Ted Manno [another student] came into town and used his shoulder as a crying towel for a couple of days. Then Hans went totally berserk and called his Bishop to announce his resignation and that he was going to be a missionary in Tanzania (really!). He also decided not to take the prelims but RMK talked him into it. All this left Pat

4 See Tom Bates, *Rads: The 1970 Bombing of the Army Math Research Center at the University of Wisconsin and Its Aftermath* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), for an account of the violent climax of the student movement at Wisconsin.

with less than 3 weeks to study, and then the weekend before the tests his aunt who was quite close died so he had to march off to Milwaukee until the day of the tests. I think he will get the award for hardly studying for prelims and still passing them. Anyway, I do hope he passed them and he is confident that he did.

And then we come to Hans. As I mentioned above, he went through many different and diverse periods of panic each of which was accompanied by a different set of sleeping pills and tranquilizers. I am beginning to appreciate what you went through last year. Every day outside of some class he would corner me for about half an hour. He made me so nervous that I stopped going to class because no matter how I tried to run away from him he always managed to catch me near the door. After I stopped going to class I was through with him, but all he did was to hook himself on to Pat. I understand that he called Pat every day and made him crazy. A week before prelims Pat called me and told me that Hans was in a very bad way. He had tried to do some studying with him and saw that it was impossible. He said that he would love for Hans to pass but felt that Hans knew very little and thought that Hans would probably not pass. Everyone is hoping that somehow Hans will sneak through, but I don't think anyone is expecting him to pass. No one knows what will happen to Hans if he should fail. In all events we are all waiting for results now.

Donnelly wrote in a celebratory mood even before he received the results. First, he announced his confidence in obtaining a fellowship next year at I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies located outside Florence; he had been corresponding with its director, Myron Gilmore, "so I may be making frequent trips to Rome [...]. It should provide an excuse for a few glasses of wine together on the Via Veneto. I hope your Italian is good, because I have none." Next, he promised a party for all Kingdon's graduate students. He ended by boasting about his weight: "Incidentally, Lynn, you will not easily recognize me. I am down to 165 pounds, and will probably take off a few more. I won't be able to push you around on the basketball court any more, but now I'm so fast that I can go around you for that easy lay up. I hope the pasta has not been moving you up the scale, but I have fears of what an Italian diet and multitudinous Jesuit letters may do to the best guard Oregon ever produced."

Many of us had cause for celebration. Donnelly, Friedman, and Gustafson all passed the prelims, Gustafson obtaining three B's and one failure on the four parts. Friedman received a small grant of \$1000 to help with his expenses in moving to the University of Chicago and then obtained a fellowship from the Newberry Library worth \$3000 a year plus an apartment and an office, Donnelly

received notification in January that his application for a fellowship at I Tatti had been successful, and I obtained a Ford Foundation Fellowship to finance my additional year in Rome. Donnelly's fellowship was worth \$2500, which he hoped was enough for living and travel expenses for 15 months. Mine was worth \$3000 for nine months; experience had taught me that was not enough, but then my fellowship also had to support my wife, and we were expecting a baby in September. Both Donnelly and I nonetheless applauded our good fortune. Even Kingdon could be pleased with his Guggenheim grant that permitted him to spend the next academic year doing research away from Madison and its committees, primarily in Geneva.

After the drama of the past semester, Donnelly evidently kept his head down when classes recommenced towards the end of January, and the only comment made by other graduate students about him at this time indicates that the radical elements were still annoyed with his stand on the History Students Association: "I understand activists on campus and in the department are very upset with him." In February the campus was rocked by demonstrations on behalf of the demands made by black students and the consequent intervention by the National Guard, but Donnelly did not write about it. Others wrote conflicting reports, and Bob Kolb seemed amused by it all:

You probably are surprised that I haven't been at least bloodied up in the widespread rioting and violence that has shaken the campus. At least that might be your impression if you'd been watching US TV. Actually I had one class disrupted this past Monday in the last gasp of the strike; other than that in going to class ten times last week, I crossed one picket line and that was all. I saw a couple crowds blocking traffic on State, Park, and University [Streets], but I missed the cops breaking them up. Only on Friday did I see any cops or guardsmen—then the halls were filled with guardsmen. Oh, this Monday, I did see some guardsmen when they came back on campus after there had been a couple class disruptions. But the campus situation was not disturbed any where [sic] near as much as the media would have you believe.

Kingdon's graduate students were more concerned with their grades and related prospects for employment and scholarships than with the demonstrations and the intervention, and they were consequently very upset with the treatment they were receiving from him. As one wrote, "unhappiness in the Kingdon fort is a reality and not a rumor."

As Madison's bitterly cold winter gradually turned to spring, Donnelly's thoughts pleasantly turned toward European travel and unpleasantly toward

the need to become more proficient in Italian. He was also keen to escape the campus disturbances and riots, especially since his house on Langdon St. was right in the middle of the battleground. Towards the end of May he reported on the latest troubles: "This time I am convinced the blame is clearly with the police, who were looking for trouble. Tear gas and a few clubbings. Once the cops decided to clear out of the student areas, the trouble disappeared. Langdon street was comparatively quiet—a cop car would cruise down the street, somebody would shout 'pigs,' the cop car would stop, dump out a couple of canisters of tear gas, then move on."

Donnelly's arrival in Europe would mean that four of Kingdon's graduate students were doing research there. On Easter Sunday Noreen and I encountered Luther Peterson and his wife, Patty, in St. Peter's square where we had gone to see the pope, the crowds, and the spectacle. He was taking a break from his research in Germany. After learning that he had passed his prelims, Hans Gustafson went to England, from where he travelled to Rome in May to discover what the Vatican Library might hold of interest to him. Donnelly intended to travel extensively with his Eurail pass before settling down in Florence, but his plans were cut short by a severe case of flu. Meanwhile, we continued to maintain our matriculation in Madison. Oddly enough, despite the expectation that many graduate students would research their dissertations at libraries and archives throughout the world, and despite the approximately fifty students who were so engaged at any one time, the University of Wisconsin had no provisions for long distance enrollments; students had to rely on friends to complete the process each semester. Donnelly had performed that favor for me, and now we both turned to Bob Kolb. It was no trifling matter since enrollment was necessary for us to receive our scholarship funds.

As Donnelly settled into Florence he discovered that I Tatti, art historian Bernard Berenson's villa outside Florence and since 1961 the site of the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, was not as inaccessible as he had been led to believe, but that it still took about an hour by bus to get there. His initial reaction was mixed: "The only duty the fellows seem to have is to make an appearance several times weekly at a splendid lunch so as to stimulate each other. Great, except that my *pensione* charges for lunch whether I'm there or not, and this place is way out in the country. Maybe I'll buy a motor scooter." I Tatti had an outstanding library devoted to art history, which was of little use for Donnelly; instead he intended to use the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence. As for accommodation he stayed at Hotel Palermo, one of the four *pensioni* used by Gonzaga University for its 93 students in Florence. Before getting to work, he wanted to go to Sicily while his Eurail pass remained

valid. He stopped at Rome on his way south to see us and then wrote a report on his trip when he returned:

My trip to Sicily turned out an utter fiasco. I got a compartment pretty much to myself on the way down and managed to sleep pretty good, although I was pretty cold. Next time I'll bring a sweater and long undies. I got down to Messina about eight, but it took till 12:30 to get to Syracuse which I wanted to see. It was cold, cloudy and soon began to rain pretty hard. I looked around for a place to say mass—Sunday—but all the churches were locked up tight and nobody around. Finally I got on a bus, went back to the train station, got a quick lunch in a second rate nearby restaurant, grabbed some candy bars for supper, boarded the 14:28 for Milano. I had a compartment all the way and slept fairly well. Got off at 8:10 in Florence, went to my hotel, and found out that for reasons too complicated to explain, I was locked out of my room till noon. Well, I saw Sicily—total cost \$2.

In November Kingdon wrote from Geneva with the news that Donnelly had just been there, "rushing through in his usual headlong way as he tries to squeeze the last bit of value out of his Eurail pass. But he did stop long enough for a good talk." Kingdon had left Prof. Manfred Welti of Basel in charge of his graduate students in Madison while he went on the European conference circuit, first to Montpellier where he presented a paper on Huguenots in America and then to Rotterdam for an Erasmus Congress and to undertake some business for the Federation of Renaissance Studies. Now he was back in Geneva working on a book, among other things, on the reaction to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres, whose 400th anniversary would occur in 1972. He hoped to go to Rome to see Giorgio Vasari's frescoes of the massacres commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII.

Come December, Donnelly resolved to apply himself to his research, or perhaps his Eurail pass had finally expired, for he wrote, "I have been applying myself with growing assiduity and declining reluctance to the grim business of reading the *Opera* of [Peter] Martyr [Vermigli] [...]. The job is getting bigger than I had thought because all of Martyr's works are longer than I had anticipated and my rate of progress through them slower. I will just have to spend more time in the library, less at I Tatti, although that remains a most pleasant place to go for lunch, even if one wastes two hours coming and going. I was looking forward to today's lunch guest, H. Trevor-Roper, the Regius Professor at Oxford. He turned out a bit of a bore." As for his Italian, it was progressing

more slowly than his research and required an unusual expedient: "I have set up a bribery system: every day I study Italian I put 500 lire into a kitty to buy art books and records. To such expedients are the weak-willed driven!" (So much for Jesuit discipline!) Donnelly's "growing assiduity and declining reluctance" yielded dividends, and by early 1970 he became increasingly confident with his progress and with his dissertation, confident enough to consider more travel, this time to Moscow for an international congress of historians.

His travel plans changed dramatically as a result of the arrival of his 66-year-old mother towards the end of February, which was bad news as far as he was concerned because it meant he had to spend most of March playing "tourist guide and factotum." He brought her to Rome, where she met Noreen and me and treated us to a meal at a restaurant that was beyond the means of a student. Donnelly had plans to take her on "a quick circuit" of Venice, Vienna, Munich, Innsbruck and Verona, "then rush back and prepare for the ordeal [a report he had to give] on March 26." His trips to Rome at this time were much appreciated because the administration at the University of Wisconsin refused to acknowledge that Bob Kolb had completed my enrollment and consequently was no longer sending me money. Donnelly loaned me enough to tide me over and sent a scathing condemnation to the responsible office.

Kingdon meanwhile had spent Christmas in India visiting his sister; on his return to Geneva he began planning a trip to Italy and sought my assistance in gaining access to the papal apartments so he could see the Vasari frescoes. He scored an invitation from Myron Gilmore to spend the last week of March at I Tatti, and he then planned to spend the first ten days of April in Rome. Since all fellows were required to give a report on the progress of their research, Gilmore scheduled Donnelly's report to coincide with Kingdon's visit, hence the "ordeal on March 26." With some difficulty I gained permission for us to see the frescoes in the papal apartments; access was through the Sistine Chapel. When the Vatican official open the doors to the apartments with a flourish of keys (I almost expected a fanfare of trumpets) we saw that all the frescoes were completely covered and hidden by scaffolding. They were in restoration.

Noreen, our baby daughter, and I left Rome late in April, spent a month in Paris where I worked at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and were back in Madison by June. Donnelly was still in Florence in mid-July, not exactly enjoying his last days in Italy. He fainted in the street, refused to go to the hospital, but then decided he needed a thorough medical examination; next he required stitches when he cut his hand on broken glass, had to pay 80,000 lire [something like \$128 at the time, which is close to \$800 in 2016] for photocopies to take back to Madison, encountered the expense of mailing packages, and worst of all realized that his dissertation required major rethinking: "I got a major shock

Saturday—uncovered some evidence that puts into severe question many of the conclusions I have been forming for half a year. The factual material I have been building up for most of the year remains unshaken, but the significance now seems far less than I supposed."

Donnelly would not write to me again until over a year later in September, 1971, when we both had our PhDs and both were university professors. We have continued to correspond with each other ever since; my file of his correspondence is huge. Nonetheless, I do not think we would claim that we stimulated each other, as the fellows at I Tatti were supposed to do. I am also certain that my impact on his scholarship has been negligible to say the least. Because Donnelly is a Jesuit and because my scholarship for a long time focussed on the Society, he had ample opportunity to have an impact on mine. He did so in many different ways, providing me with bibliographical references, introductions to other Jesuits, explanations for Jesuit practices and terminology, and constructive criticism of ideas and drafts. All of my books on the Jesuits acknowledge his help. Aside from these concrete illustrations of Donnelly's assistance, his life revealed the humanity of Jesuits so that they no longer seemed intimidating to me, as they did at the beginning of my research. How can anyone be intimidated by someone who awards himself with 500 lire every time he studies Italian? Or by someone who boasts of spending \$2 on a trip to Sicily? As a result of our friendship my approach to the history of the Society of Jesus was less affected by confessional bias. Pat Donnelly made me a better historian.

