Preliminary Considerations:
1. Article written by Kathryn Jean Lopez (she spoke at The Aquinas Society of Cincinnati in the fall of 2018 in our Revolution series) about Myle Connolly and Dan England and the Noonday Devil - link [here](#).
2. Acedia (definition): more commonly called sloth through confusion with its most notable effect is a disgust with the spiritual because of the physical effort involved. If the spiritual good from which acedia recoils has a necessary connection with the divine good, which should be the subject of Christian joy, it can be a sin, and even serious. Moreover, acedia is one of the capital sins, a common distraction from virtue, producing other, even quite distinct, sins. The word describing this constant human phenomenon is found not only in the Septuagint Bible (e.g., Sir 6.26) but in Greek and Latin pagan authors; etymologists show that the word should not be derived from Latin acidus but from the Greek a-kòdoj (not caring).

Whatever its possibly Stoic origins may be, the psychology of the temptation received most careful attention from the desert fathers of the fourth century, who discussed it in the context of other evil thoughts as the daemon meridianus (Ps 90.6). Evagrius Ponticus in 383 seems to be the first to have written a description of acedia in his De octo vitiosis cogitationibus (Patrologia Graeca, ed. J. P. Migne, 40:1274), obviously drawing more from actual experience than literary antecedents. The loneliness of the hermitage in the barren desert, a body worn out by fasting, and a mind fatigued by long prayers were conditions calculated to bring on the ennui and restlessness that was called acedia. John Cassian faithfully reported this fairly common trouble to the West in his On the Spirit of Acedia (Conferences 10; Patrologia Latina, ed. J. P. Migne, 49:359–369). The description of Cassian luxuriates in psychological detail, showing that acedia can express itself not simply in laziness but even in nervous activity. Evagrius, Cassian, and in fact the entire Oriental tradition had spoken of melancholy (lupò) as a distinct sin though closely connected with acedia. St. Gregory the Great in his commentary of Job (Moralia 31.45; Patrologia Latina 76:620) omitted acedia from his list of principal sins and included only sadness (stistitìa). Nevertheless, as later commentators have pointed out, in one respect the more ancient tradition—the use of the word acedia, or its corruption.
accidia—prevailed. Moreover six “daughter” sins are for the first time explicitly named in connection with this melancholy: malice, rancor, pusillanimitiy, despair, torpor concerning commandments, and a wandering of the mind around forbidden things. Finally, St. Gregory, or at least the Gregorian pastoral tradition, is responsible for the removal of acedia from its original context in which it was a special temptation for monks, and for viewing it as an interior malaise that expressed itself most frequently in a tardy and slothful performance of religious and other duties (cf., e.g., Rabanus Maurus, De ecclesiastica disciplina, Patrologia Latina, 112:1251–53; Jonas of Orleans, De institutione laicali, Patrologia Latina, 102:245–246; Alcuin, Liber de virtutibus c.32, Patrologia Latina, 101:635; St. Antoninus, Summa theologiae moralis 2.10:933–938). St. Thomas Aquinas opposed acedia to the joy of charity, and in a precise study demonstrated its sinfulness by showing the evil of sadness over a genuinely good object and likewise the excessiveness of even legitimate sorrow when it impedes the performance of duty.

The specificity of acedia St. Thomas sees in its opposition to the divine good as man may participate in it, but the intimate connection of the other virtues with charity permits a wide scope for acedia. Nevertheless, acedia’s direct attack on charity’s act of rejoicing in the divine good makes it serious matter, although imperfect acts of acedia are found even in the holy.

Finally, St. Thomas justified acedia’s right to be called capital from its ability to produce other sins. The “daughter” sins associated with acedia in the Gregorian tradition, as well as their proliferation in the encyclopedic effort of St. Isidore (In Deut., Patrologia Latina, 83:366), are ingeniously explained (ST 2a2ae, 35; De malo 11). While the commentators have remained faithful to the Thomistic synthesis, a popular tendency to confuse acedia with its principal external effect, sloth (pigritia), developed. Those aware of more profound interior implications attempted the spiritualization of acedia by “baptizing” it spiritual sloth. This terminology, adapted from St. John of the Cross (Dark Night . . . 1.7), has the disadvantage of making acedia appear to be an exotic sin reserved for the spiritual elite, whereas the tradition and experience show it to be a very common difficulty. Source: Catholic Encyclopedia.

2. According to Dom Abbot acedia is the root cause of the greatest crisis in the Church today.

3. As you read the text, identify the Catholic spiritual approaches of Franciscan, Jesuit, and Carmelite.¹

   a. **Franciscan Spirituality**: Franciscan spirituality motivates a way of following Christ that is based on the gospels. It embraces a diversity of vocations: lay and clerical, contemplative and active, academic and pastoral, married and celibate.

¹ Catholic Encyclopedia.
Emerging out of the high middle ages, it emphasizes the humanity of Jesus Christ as the mystery of God’s presence in human flesh.

b. **Jesuit Spirituality**: The elements of *Ignatian spirituality* are expressed in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. St. Ignatius emphasizes contemplation to attain the love of God (that it is God who gives blessings and Himself). God lives in His creatures and works through them for us. God is the source of all good things. God moves the will and brings to one’s mind what he ought to do and by His love that descends from above His holy will (*ibid.* 1, 91, 135) is made known in the inner recesses of our being.

c. **Carmelite Spirituality**: Carmelite spirituality is rooted in the *Vita Apostolica* movement of the 12th and 13th centuries and flowers with a particular brilliance in the 16th-century Spanish Reformation, 17th-century France and again in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Traditionally *Carmelite spirituality* has focused very narrowly, interpreting its experience through the writings of the two great mystical Carmelite Doctors of the Church, saints Teresa of Jesus (Teresa of Avila) and John of the Cross.

**Chapter One**

4. Why did Connelly use St. Crispin, the patron saint of shoemakers to beg help in explaining Dan?

5. How was Dan conflicted?

6. Would you want to meet Dan? Why or why not? Do you know a Dan in your own life?

**Chapter Two**

7. **Character**: Alvin Briggs - agnostic Religious editor of newspaper and co-worker and friend of the protagonist.
   a. Describe Briggs and his detachment related to Taggart.
   b. Is Briggs without prejudices as he claims?

8. **Character**: Taggart - assistant editor and co-worker of Briggs.

**Chapter Three**

9. Some considerations re: Briggs and his vegetarianism: *The Greek mathematician Pythagoras was a vegetarian, and vegetarians were often called Pythagoreans until the word was created.* (The term "vegetarian" was coined by the British Vegetarian Society in the mid-1800’s. The Latin root of the word refers to the source of life.) Leonardo da Vinci, Benjamin Franklin, Albert Einstein, and George Bernard Shaw were also vegetarians. (Source: The Vegetarian Guide - MichaelBlueJay)

10. What is the meaning behind Briggs ordering Lamb?

11. What can be attributed to the transformation in Briggs?

12. What is the feast of Little Christmas?
a. "Little Christmas" is the Feast of Epiphany that falls on Jan. 6. It celebrates the gifts of the wise men to Jesus Christ. Some cultures save gift exchanges for Little Christmas, keeping Christmas Day as a purely religious holiday. Although many countries celebrate Little Christmas on Jan. 6 as the celebration of the three wise men's visit to Jesus Christ, history suggests that Little Christmas is, in fact, one of the two days originally determined to be Jesus' birth. The other day is Dec. 25. Eventually, Dec. 25 became the official celebratory date for Christmas, while Jan. 6 became known as Little Christmas, or the Feast of Epiphany. The period of time between the birth of Jesus Christ and the visit of The Magi became known as "The Twelve Days of Christmas". In Ireland, Jan. 6 is not known just as Little Christmas, but also as "Women's Christmas." Traditionally, Irish women do all the housework. However, on Jan. 6, the women receive a rest from their labors and men take over their chores. While the men do housework, the women go to pubs and public houses, traditionally a man's domain, to relax and eat. Children often buy presents for their mothers and grandmothers on this day as well. (Source: www.reference.com)

b. Is there a reason Connolly uses the unique last name of Ratherskin and the narrative concerning Ratherskin's conversion?
   i. Consider the Dominican and Franciscan hagiography: “When the brothers of Nocera asked a man for the loan of a cart, he replied indignantly: "I would rather skin two of you alive, and Saint Francis with you, than let you use my cart." But when he calmed down, he contradicted himself and was sorry for his blasphemous words, for he feared the wrath of God. Soon his son became ill and died. When the man saw his son dead, he rolled around on the ground in grief, and weeping, invoked Saint Francis, saying: "It is I who have sinned! You ought to be scourging me! O Saint, give back to the one devoutly beseeching you what you have taken from the one who unjustifiably blasphemed you!" His son arose and held his laments in check. "When I was dead," he said, "St. Francis led me along a long, dark road and finally brought me to a very beautiful garden. Then he said to me: 'Return to your father! I do not wish to detain you any longer.'"

2

c. What is the significance of the porter in the hotel pertaining to Ratherskin?
   i. Consider porters who were saints: St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, St. Conrad of Parzham, St. Andre Bessette, St. Juan Macias, O.P.

13. Did Ratherskin receive the supernatural gift of faith?
14. Is Briggs experiencing a dark night of the senses (p.32)?
15. What is the significance of calling Briggs by his first name Alvin?

---

2 Dominican Hagiography and Sermons
Chapter Four

16. In what way is Dan a Christ like figure?
**Characters**

**Dan England** - A single man who loves food, wine, and conversation. Dan is a natural born storyteller who made a living by writing detective stories.

**Alvin Briggs** - agnostic Religious editor of newspaper and co-worker and friend of the protagonist.

**Taggart** - assistant editor and co-worker of Briggs.