

VALUE OPPORTUNITIES

MARKET COMMENTARY

The S&P 500 Index returned a modest +0.6% in the third quarter of 2021. The index reached an all-time high in early September, up nearly +6% for the quarter, before declining throughout the remainder of the month. Economic developments over the quarter were mixed. US real GDP grew an impressive +6.7% in the most recent quarter (seasonally adjusted quarter-over-quarter). The positive momentum in labor markets slowed, however, as many businesses are contending with serious labor shortages. Business owners are hopeful that labor availability will improve due to the expiration of enhanced pandemic unemployment benefits in September, though higher wages and benefits appear likely. This fuels already-tight supply conditions and increases inflationary pressures. Inflation persisted above 5% (year-over-year), its highest level in well over a decade. The Fed voted to keep its target Fed Funds rate near zero until the economy approaches “maximum employment and inflation has risen to 2 percent and is on track to moderately exceed 2 percent for some time.”¹ There have been some increasingly hawkish comments from FOMC members, with some suggesting that the economic recovery warrants tapering in the near term. The yield on the 10-year treasury note began and ended the quarter at about 1.5% but fell below 1.2% intra-quarter. Shorter and longer duration treasuries experienced similar moves during the quarter, i.e., there was little change to the yield curve.

Oil prices followed a curiously similar path to interest rates. WTI crude oil began the quarter at about \$73/barrel, then declined to nearly \$62/barrel intra-quarter, before reverting to \$75/barrel by quarter end. Through July and August, all S&P 500 sectors had positive returns except energy, which was down more than 10%. This reversed in September. All S&P 500 sectors declined during September except energy, which was up more than 9% as crude prices rose. For the entire quarter, energy was one of four sectors with a negative return, though it was modest decline (-1.6%). Financials performed best, as both insurers and banks outperformed. Industrials performed worst, as transportation/logistics and manufacturing business were disproportionately hurt by labor and supply shortages. Overall, Corporate America continues to perform well as 87% of S&P 500 companies surpassed consensus earnings expectations in the quarter.

Growth outperformed value modestly. The Russell 3000 Growth Index returned +0.7% while the Russell 3000 Value Index declined -0.9%. In the recent past, COVID-19 developments appear to have dictated which investing style outperformed—positive developments have favored value, negative developments growth. At the beginning of the quarter, there were about 12,000 to 15,000 new confirmed cases per day². As the Delta variant spread, this number increased to more than 150,000 by mid-September, before retreating to about 110,000 by quarter end. The performance difference between value and growth largely moved in tandem with COVID’s progression. At the peak of new

cases in mid-September, growth led value by more than 5 percentage points quarter-to-date. This gap narrowed to less than 2 percentage points by September’s end, as new cases subsided. We continue to focus on fundamentals and valuation because that is what drives stock prices in the long run; however, we believe the blunting of the pandemic through improved inoculation, herd immunity, or both, could provide a welcomed catalyst for a prolonged value rally.

Dating back to 1926, the average value rally has lasted just shy of three years, with an average outperformance of 55 percentage points, cumulatively³. Some of the more powerful and long-lasting value rallies have persisted for 7 to 10 years, with value outperforming growth by well over 100 percentage points. The common trait among these most formidable value-led markets is that each came on the heels of a prolonged period of growth outperformance, and each began with wide valuation spreads. The similarities between today’s environment and the early stages of those strong value rallies are noticeable. Because the portfolio trades at a valuation discount to the Russell 3000 Value, we believe a value-led market would be highly conducive to our investment approach, even relative to the value benchmark. We continue to focus on companies that trade at significant discounts to intrinsic value, but also possess quality businesses, strong balance sheets, and prudent corporate governance.

ATTRIBUTION – 3Q21

The Hotchkis & Wiley Value Opportunities portfolio (gross and net of management fees) outperformed the Russell 3000 Value Index in the third quarter of 2021 by a considerable margin. Positive security selection in healthcare was the largest contributor, as it was announced that the sizable position in Triple-S Management would be acquired at a significant premium to its pre-announcement market price. Positive security selection in energy, technology, and communication services also helped. Security selection in real estate and consumer discretionary detracted from performance. The largest positive contributors to relative performance in the quarter were Triple-S Management, Range Resources, Stagwell, F5 Networks, and AIG; the largest detractors were Royal Mail, NOV Inc., Discovery, Seritage Growth Properties, and Iracore International.

¹ <https://www.federalreserve.gov/monetarypolicy/files/monetary20210922a1.pdf>

² 7-day moving averages

³ Statistics in this paragraph reference data from the Kenneth French Dartmouth data library

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Composite performance is available at www.hwcm.com, located on the strategy's Performance tab. Returns discussed can differ from actual portfolio returns due to data differences, cash flows, trading, and other activity. Portfolio characteristics and attribution based on representative Value Opportunities portfolio. Certain client portfolio(s) may or may not hold the securities discussed due to each account's guideline restrictions, cash flow, tax and other relevant considerations. Performance attribution is an analysis of the portfolio's return relative to the index, is calculated using daily holdings information and does not reflect management fees and other transaction costs and expenses; interaction effect is combined with stock selection. Specific securities identified are the largest contributors (or detractors) to the portfolio's performance relative to the index. Other securities may have been the best and worst performers on an absolute basis. No assurance is made that any securities identified, or all investment decisions by H&W were or will be profitable.

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The value discipline used in managing accounts in the Value Opportunities strategy may prevent or limit investment in major stocks in the Russell 3000 Value, Russell 3000 Growth and S&P 500 and returns may not be correlated to the indexes. Quarterly characteristics and portfolio holdings are available at www.hwcm.com, located on the strategy's Portfolio and Literature tabs. For a list showing every holding's contribution to the overall account's performance and portfolio activity for a given time period, contact H&W at hotchkisandwiley@hwcm.com. Portfolio information is subject to the firm's portfolio holdings disclosure policy.

Equity securities may have greater risks and price volatility than U.S. Treasuries and bonds, where the price of these securities may decline due to various company, industry and market factors. The strategy may be exposed to more individual stock volatility than a more diversified strategy and may also invest in smaller and/or medium-sized companies, foreign securities, and debt securities.

Style Risk: A value-oriented investment approach involves the risk that value stocks may remain undervalued or may not appreciate in value as anticipated. Value stocks can perform differently from the market as a whole or from other types of stocks and may be out of favor with investors and underperform growth stocks for varying periods of time.

Market Disruption: The global coronavirus pandemic has caused disruption in the global economy, unprecedented business and travel disruption and extreme fluctuations in global capital and financial markets. H&W is unable to predict the consequences of the upheaval caused by coronavirus pandemic, which has the potential to negatively impact the firm's investment strategies and investment opportunities.

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