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The Tower and the Sewer

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Catholic postliberal thinkers opposed to modern liberal individualism are less interested in transforming people's unhappy lives through the power of the gospel than in jockeying for political power as the vanguard of a conservative revolution.

Charlie Riedel/AP Images

Students leaving Mass at Benedictine College, Atchison, Kansas, December 2023

Reviewed:

Why Liberalism Failed
by Patrick J. Deneen, with a foreword by James Davison Hunter and John M. Owen IV
Yale University Press, 225 pp., $19.00 (paper)

From Fire, by Water: My Journey to the Catholic Faith
by Sohrab Ahmari
Ignatius, 214 pp., $22.95

+ See All

> When you go looking for what is lost, everything is a sign.
> Eudora Welty, "The Wide Net"

On an overcast morning in the late 1980s I visited the church across the way from my apartment in Paris. I was curious. The parish, St.-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, was then the headquarters of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, a schismatic opponent of the Vatican II reforms who had just been excommunicated by Pope John Paul II. Conservative Catholics from all over the city squeezed into the church on Sundays to hear Gregorian chants and the Tridentine Mass recited in Latin—a beautiful, forbidden experience.

After the service a fair number of congregants gathered in the church's small courtyard to chat and leaf though some of the right-wing books and newspapers that had been laid out on folding tables. When I hovered over one of them, a young man behind it mentioned a shop where I could find more in the same vein. He tore off a scrap of paper and wrote down an address, telling me that the bookstore had no sign—there had been arson attempts at earlier locations—and that I should just knock on the door.

I went, I knocked, I was given the once over, then admitted. After passing through a thick crimson drape I discovered a jumble of overstuffed bookcases lining the walls of a good-size room. Despite appearances there turned out to be order in the disorder: the collection had been laid out chronologically according to the French right's conflicting historical obsessions.

The first bookcase was devoted to the neopaganism of the Nouvelle Droite (New Right), which since the 1960s has been inspired by the writer and editor Alain de Benoist; his *On Being a Pagan* (1981) is considered one of its foundational texts. This group is in a sense the most radical, if minuscule, force on the European right because it places Eden so far back in time that it blames the advent of Christianity two millennia ago for Europe's relentless decline. The next bookcase, though, contained histories extolling Christianity's victory over paganism and pining for the simple harmony of the monastic Middle Ages. Next to those I found lush volumes celebrating the unmonastic grandeur of the Catholic House of Bourbon. A few bookcases were then given over to the catastrophe of the Revolution, with hagiographies of the counterrevolutionary uprisings of the Chouans and the Vendeans.

Farther down the aisle were strongly anti-German books focused on the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. After those, predictably, was a large collection of anti-Dreyfusard works, all supposedly proving that even if Alfred Dreyfus wasn't a German agent, then at least his supporters were. Yet in the bookcase next to it I found philo-Germanic biographies of Nazi generals like Erwin Rommel and of the heroic Vichy collaborators.

Angry books on French Algeria then followed, including memoirs by officers in the Organisation Armée Secrète who resisted the French withdrawal from its colony and in retribution tried to assassinate French president Charles de Gaulle in 1962. The last bookcase contained attacks on the student rebels of May 1968, who had also wanted to oust de Gaulle, though for very different reasons. And at the end, on the floor next to the cash register, was a wire bin filled with cassettes of racist heavy metal music by bands with German names.

A moveable feast of bitter herbs.

It has always been more difficult to make sense of the radical right than the radical left. Back when there were serious left-wing bookstores catering to active socialists rather than leisured graduate students, those, too, were a little helter-skelter. Utopian authors rubbed shoulders with Stalinists, anarchists with Trotskyists, interpreters of the wisdom of Chairman Mao with interpreters of the wisdom of the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha (a Seventies thing). Shelves were devoted to each and every postcolonial liberation movement then active, with many manifestos written by obscure revolutionaries destined to become infamous tyrants. Yet despite the intellectual and geographical variety, one always had the sense that the authors imagined they were aiming at the same abstract goal: a future of human emancipation into a state of freedom and equality.

But what ultimate goal do those on the radical right share? That's harder to discern, since when addressing the present they almost always speak in the past tense. Contemporary life is compared to a half-imagined lost world that inspires and limits reflection about possible futures. Since there are many pasts that could conceivably provoke a militant nostalgia, one might think that the political right would therefore be hopelessly fractious. This turns out not to be true. It is possible to attend right-wing conferences whose speakers include national conservatives enamored of the Peace of Westphalia, secular populists enamored of Andrew Jackson, Protestant evangelicals enamored of the Wailing Wall, paleo-Catholics enamored of the fifth-century Church, gun lovers enamored of the nineteenth-century Wild West, hawks enamored of the twentieth-century cold war, isolationists enamored of the 1940s America First Committee, and acned young men waving around thick manifestos by a preposterous figure known as the Bronze Age Pervert. And they all get along.

The reason, I think, is that these usable pasts serve more as symbolic hieroglyphs for the right than as actual models for orienting action. That is why they go in and out of fashion unpredictably, depending on changes in the political and intellectual climate. The most that can be said is that the further to the right one goes, the greater the conviction that a decisive historical break is to blame for the loathsome present, and that accelerating decline must be met with...well, something. That's when things get vague.

Rhetorical vagueness is a powerful political weapon, as past revolutionaries have understood. Jesus once likened the Kingdom of God to "leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." Not terribly enlightening, but not terribly contentious either. Marx and Engels once spoke of a postrevolutionary communist society where one could hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, and write angry manifestos at night. After that they let the matter drop. Maintaining vagueness about the future is what now allows those on the American right with very different views of the past to share an illusory sense of common purpose for the future.

How, then, is one to understand the radical right today? Prior to the election of Donald Trump, the instinctive response of American liberals and progressives was simply not to try. Journalists who embedded themselves in far-right groups, or scholars who engaged seriously with their ideas, were often greeted with suspicion as agents provocateurs (as I can attest). That has changed. Today journalists cover many of the important groups and movements, and do a fairly good job of plumbing the lower depths of right-wing Internet chatter. Anyone who wants to know what is being said in these obscure circles, in the US and around the world, can now find out.

But keeping up with trends is not the same as understanding what they signify. What so often seems lacking in our reporting is alertness to the psychodynamics of ideological commitment. The great political novelists of the past—Dostoevsky, Conrad, Thomas Mann—created protagonists who make coherent ideological arguments that other characters engage with seriously but that also reveal something significant about their psychological makeup. (A classic example is the intellectual jousting of Lodovico Settembrini and Leo Naphta in *The Magic Mountain*.) These authors wrote the way good psychoanalysts practice their art in the consulting room. Analysts do not dismiss the reasons we give for what we feel and believe, which might contain a good deal of truth. They are not just waiting for the *gotcha* moment when our "real"—that is, base—motives appear and our stated reasons can be dismissed (a common excuse for not paying attention to the right). They look at us through two different lenses: as inquiring creatures who sometimes find the truth, and as self-deceiving creatures whose searches are willfully

incomplete, revealingly repetitive, emotionally charged, and often self-undermining. That is the skill required to begin understanding the leading ideological movements of our time, especially those on the right.

To my mind, the most psychologically interesting stream of American right-wing thought today is Catholic postliberalism, sometimes called "common-good conservatism." The "post" in "postliberalism" means a rejection of the intellectual foundations of modern liberal individualism. The focus is not on a narrow set of political principles, such as rights. It is on an all-encompassing modern outlook that postliberals say prizes autonomy above all else and that is seemingly indifferent to the psychological and social effects of radical individualism. Such an outlook is not only hostile to the notion of natural or socially imposed moral limits to individual action, which are also necessary for human happiness. It has also gradually undermined the preliberal intellectual foundations of Western societies that once made it easier to protect the common good against the claims of selfish individuals. The Catholic postliberals would like to establish (or reestablish) a more communitarian vision of the good society, one in which democratic institutions would in some sense be subordinate to a superior, authoritative moral vision of the human good—which for many of them means the authority of the Catholic Church.

In the past decade interest in Catholic ideas and practice has been growing among right-leaning intellectual elites, and it is not unusual to meet young conservatives at Ivy League institutions who have converted or renewed their faith since coming to college. These students often gather at new off-campus study centers funded by conservative foundations and Catholic donors, where they invite speakers and read classic works together. While not sharing their faith, I have had students such as these and I like them. Most are searching earnestly for meaning and direction, and at these centers they have found intellectual companionship. They remind me somewhat of American students in the early 1960s who wanted to escape the air-conditioned nightmare they felt trapped in and turned for spiritual nourishment to important religious authors of the time like Thomas Merton and Paul Tillich—a forgotten chapter in the canonical history of the Sixties.

Like them, the students I meet feel the hollowness of contemporary culture, which is now heightened by the ephemeral yet fraught online relationships they have with others. So one can understand their romantic infatuation with the notion of Catholic tradition and its intellectual heritage, which promise structure and spiritual depth. (Something similar is happening to Jewish students drawn to the Modern Orthodox movement.) It's also easy to see how they could be attracted to postliberals on the right, who claim to reveal that the source of their despair is not human existence itself—as Merton and Tillich thought—but rather the "liberal project of modernity." This makes them highly susceptible to dreams of returning to premodern Christian social teachings that would undergird a more decent and just society, and more meaningful personal lives for themselves. This is a vain but not contemptible hope.

The book that first crystallized the postliberal mood was Patrick Deneen's *Why Liberalism Failed*, which created a great stir when it was published in 2018 and received an endorsement from Barack Obama. The description of postliberal thinking I offer above is largely drawn from this book. Deneen focused in particular on how the idealization of autonomy has worked as an acid eating away at the deepest cultural foundations inherited from the Christian era, which he believes supported shared customs and beliefs that cultivated stable families, a sense of obligation, and virtues like moderation, modesty, and charity. Ross Douthat summed up his argument well:

> Where it once delivered equality, liberalism now offers plutocracy; instead of liberty, appetitiveness regulated by a surveillance state; instead of true intellectual and religious freedom, growing conformity and mediocrity. It has reduced rich cultures to consumer products, smashed social and familial relations, and left us all the isolated and mutually suspicious inhabitants of an "anticulture" from which many genuine human goods have fled.[1]

How persuasive you find this description will depend on whether you share Deneen's bleak view of the way we live now.[2] Most on the postliberal right do. But they also bring into the picture concerns that typically animate the left, such as the political influence of capital, the privileges of an inbred, meritocratic elite, the devastation of the environment, and the dehumanizing effects of endless technological innovation—all of which Deneen interpreted as the fruits of liberal individualism. The postliberals see themselves as developing a more comprehensive view of the common good that integrates culture, morality, politics, and economics, which would make conservatism more consistent with itself by freeing it from Reaganite idolatry of individual property rights and the market.

Though Deneen is Catholic and teaches at Notre Dame, *Why Liberalism Failed* is not an explicitly Catholic book. To understand how distaste for the liberal present could make Catholicism psychologically appealing, it helps to read Sohrab Ahmari's political-spiritual memoir, *From Fire, by Water*. Ahmari, a friend and ally of Deneen's, was born a Muslim in Iran in 1985 and was brought to the United States by his educated parents at the age of thirteen. In his telling, he almost immediately came to disdain the "liberal sentimental ecumenism" in which he was being raised. He then became a serial converter, a type familiar to ministers. He was first an enthusiastic teen atheist, then an enthusiastic Nietzschean, then an enthusiastic Trotskyist, then an enthusiastic postmodernist, and finally a very enthusiastic neoconservative. (That's a lot of bookshelves.) It was about this time that his writings came to the attention of *The Wall Street Journal*, and he was soon working on its editorial-page staff.

Ahmari now sees his political flitting about as an unconscious search to fill a spiritual void. As generally happens in conversion stories, an epiphany arrives and things begin to change. Suffering from a drinking problem and very hungover, he wandered one day in 2008 into a Manhattan church where Mass was being celebrated. As the bells rang out for the Adoration of the Host, he melted: "Tears streamed from my eyes and down my face. These were tears neither of sadness nor even of happiness. They were tears of peace." It took eight more years for him to convert officially to Catholicism, and by his own account the decision was as political as it was theological. "I longed for stable authority as well as redemption," he writes, and the Church represented "Order. Continuity. Tradition and totality. Confidence." If gaining that meant having to accept even the obscure doctrine of the Incarnation, so be it: "Its very improbability to my mind counted in its favor."

Ahmari is a disarming writer. At one point in the book he asks, "Had I found in the Catholic faith a way to express the reactionary longings of my Persian soul, albeit in a Latin key?" He never answers that, though any fair reader could do it for him: *Yes*. But there was still one conversion to go: from neoconservatism to postliberalism.

He was initially critical of populists like Donald Trump and Viktor Orbán when they came on the scene, writing as late as 2017 that "the case for plunging into political illiberalism is weak, even on social-conservative grounds.... What commends liberalism is historical experience, not abstract theory."[3] Within two years, though, he was preaching a different sermon directed as much against the neoconservatives as against the left. Today Ahmari presents himself as a cultural conservative who admires Orbán—the Enver Hoxha of American postliberalism—and an economic social democrat who admires Elizabeth Warren. His latest book, *Tyranny, Inc.*, is a scathing and fairly effective attack on neoliberal finance capitalism and Silicon Valley's "market utopianism," and a paean to unions, regulation, fixed-benefit pension plans, and many other good progressive things. Like Deneen, he sees left- and right-wing libertarians as evil twins spawned by a liberal overclass that must be overthrown in the name of human dignity and an ordered society that would work for the least well-off. His latest project is *Compact*, a lively online magazine he cofounded and edits where antiliberals of left and right—from Glenn Greenwald and Samuel Moyn to Marco Rubio and Josh Hawley—display their wares.

Adrian Vermeule, a Harvard law professor specializing in constitutional and administrative law, is cut from different cloth. He, too, converted to Catholicism in the past decade, convinced that "there is no stable middle ground between Catholicism and atheist materialism." The Virgin Mary was apparently important to his decision: "Behind and above all those who helped me along the way, there stood a great Lady."[4]

Vermeule is both more penetrating and intellectually radical than his friends Deneen and Ahmari, which gives his writings a Janus-faced quality. His academic books are learned and well argued, and have a place in contemporary constitutional debates, including *Law and Leviathan: Redeeming the Administrative State* (2020), which he wrote with his liberal colleague (and NYR contributor) Cass Sunstein. When writing online, though, he lets his id out the back door and it starts tearing up the garden. A little like radical Islamists who speak of peace in English but of war in Arabic, Vermeule has learned to adjust his rhetoric to his audience.

His most recent book, *Common Good Constitutionalism*, makes a challenging case for abandoning both progressive and originalist readings of the American Constitution and returning to what he calls the "classical vision of law." This tradition, rooted in the works of the Roman jurists and Thomas Aquinas, took civil law to be a stable framework for pursuing the common goods of peace, justice, abundance, and solidarity for the community as a whole. Rights matter in such a system, but only derivatively as means to achieve these ends. Liberty, in Vermeule's view, is "a bad master, but a good servant" if properly constrained and directed. These are very old ideas, but Vermeule manages to breathe new life into them in a bracing way that will surprise conventional legal liberals and conservatives. For example, in a précis of the book's argument published in *The Atlantic*, he writes:

> Elaborating on the common-good principle that no constitutional right to refuse vaccination exists, constitutional law will define in broad terms the authority of the state to protect the public's health and well-being, protecting the weak from pandemics and scourges of many kinds—biological, social, and economic—even when doing so requires overriding the selfish claims of individuals to private "rights."

This is a book worth engaging with.

Such is the mainstream Vermeule. An angrier character appears in right-leaning journals like *First Things* and obscure websites of the Catholic far right. There he operates according to a maxim borrowed from the Catholic reactionary tradition running from Joseph de Maistre to Carl Schmitt: "All human conflict is ultimately theological."[5] In these writings, liberalism is not a mistaken political and legal theory, or even a mistaken way of social life. It is a "fighting, evangelistic faith" with an eschatology, a clergy, martyrs, evangelical ministers, and sacraments directed toward battling the conservative enemies of progress.[6] Their fire must be fought with fire.

Vermeule is a tired man—tired of waiting for change, tired of right-wing "quietism," tired of merely being tolerated by the oppressive liberal order that says, "You are welcome to be a domestic extremist, so long as your extremism remains safely domesticated."[7] (Tip of the hat to

Herbert Marcuse.) He wants a radical movement against liberalism that is "interested not merely in slowing its progress, but in defeating it, undoing it." To his mind, only a self-conscious political Catholicism that distinguishes temporal and spiritual power, but ultimately subordinates the former to the latter, can meet the historical challenge. He harbors the hope that a crisis and epiphany will provoke a revolutionary realignment:

> The hunger for the real might then make people so desperate, so sick of the essential falsity of liberalism, that they become willing to gamble that the Truth...will prevail—or at least willing to gamble on entering into coalition with other sorts of anti-liberals.[8]

Vermeule is a recognizable psychological type in revolutionary movements: the Accelerator. Accelerators act as scourges to their comrades, whose cowardice, they claim, is all that stands in the way of the revolution. They have historically appeared on the radical left and right as enemies of social democrats and liberal reformers who spread the illusion that amelioration through democratic institutions is possible. Accelerators see themselves as the vanguard of the vanguard and mock their allies' refusal to "break shit," as the Silicon Valley mantra goes. Eventually they become mirror images of their imagined ruthless enemies.

Vermeule has not quite reached that point. Instead he has adopted the short-term strategy of encouraging people on the right to make a long stealth march through the institutions of government. (Tip of the hat to Rudi Dutschke.) "It is a matter," he writes, "of finding a strategic position from which to sear the liberal faith with hot irons, to defeat and capture the hearts and minds of liberal agents, to take over the institutions of the old order." And the best position from which to do that is within the executive branch, where it's sometimes possible to subvert the status quo without having to consult more directly representative institutions like Congress or state legislatures. Just as Joseph insinuated himself into the Egyptian royal court to protect the Jews, so postliberals should embed themselves in bureaucracies and start nudging policy in the right direction, presumably until an antiliberal pharaoh takes charge (again).

Vermeule floated these cloak-and-dagger ideas in a critical review of his friend Deneen's *Why Liberalism Failed* in 2018. In that book Deneen still hoped to redeem liberalism by shoring up the moral foundations of local communities and educating the young in the priority of the common good. Vermeule the Accelerationist called him out, saying he was entranced by the "mystification" of the liberal order. The counterrevolution is approaching; what are you afraid of?

Deneen took this challenge to heart and responds in his latest book, *Regime Change*, which reads like it was written by a different person. The tone of *Why Liberalism Failed* was one of regret, even mourning for something precious that had been lost. The new book tries to sound more

radical but is so half-baked that at times it seems a parody of engagée literature, written in a kind of demotic Straussianism. Deneen echoes the old battle cry of counterrevolutionaries that "any undertaking to 'conserve' must first more radically overthrow the liberal ideology of progress." The good news is that "the many"—which he also calls, without a trace of irony, "the *demos*"—are achieving class consciousness, but lack the knowledge and discipline to refine their anger into a program for governing. What they need are leaders who are part of the elite but see themselves as "class traitors" ready to act as "stewards and caretakers of the common good." He calls this "aristopopulism" and its practitioners "*aristoi*." (Garbo laughs.) It is a very old fantasy of deluded political intellectuals to become the pedagogical vanguard of a popular revolution whose leaders can be made to see a glimmer of the true light. Imagine a Notre Dame professor taking a stroll around the stoa of South Bend, Indiana, explaining to the QAnon shaman the scholastics' distinction between *ius commune* and *ius naturale*, and you get the idea.

As far-fetched as the idea of right-wing *aristoi* making a long march through the institutions may seem, it is circulating at a time when Trumpian activists are using the same strategy to prepare for a battle against the "deep state" should Trump be elected again. The Heritage Foundation, for example, has contributed nearly a million dollars to Project 2025, which is amassing a database of roughly 20,000 trusted right-wingers who could be appointed to government positions immediately in a second Trump administration. The hope is not only to replace Biden's appointees, which often requires congressional approval, but to establish a new category of civil service positions (Schedule F) that could be staffed with loyalists, which is illegal under current law. Trump had established this category late in his presidency, and the Biden administration was quick to abolish it after the 2020 election. But Republicans could quite easily restore it after a Trump victory, and seem intent on doing so. As the Heritage Foundation puts it in the statement of purpose for Project 2025:

> It is not enough for conservatives to win elections. If we are going to rescue the country from the grip of the radical Left, we need both a governing agenda and the right people in place, ready to carry this agenda out on Day One of the next conservative Administration.[9]

This notion of social change having to come from the top is, in the Catholic tradition, a very papal one. In this sense, the postliberals writing today are papists in spirit even if they are not entirely enamored of the current pontiff. What is striking in their works is that they almost never speak about the power of the Gospel to transform a society and culture from below by first transforming the inner lives of its members. Saving souls is, after all, a retail business, not a wholesale one, and has nothing to do with jockeying for political power in a fallen world. Such ministering requires patience and charity and humility. It means meeting individual people where they are and persuading them that another, better way of living is possible. This is the kind of

ministering the postliberals should be engaged in if they are serious about wanting to see Americans abandon their hollow, hedonistic individualism—not hatching plans to infiltrate the Department of Education.

Jesus implored his disciples to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" as they went out into the world to preach the Word. Deneen counsels postliberal moles to adopt "Machiavellian means to Aristotelian ends" in the political sphere. This is a very different gospel message and brings to mind Montaigne's wise remark that "it is much easier to talk like Aristotle and live like Caesar than to talk and live like Socrates." Ahmari, ever the hothead, addresses the troops in more militant language, exhorting them to

> fight the culture war with the aim of defeating the enemy and enjoying the spoils in the form of a public square re-ordered to the common good and ultimately the Highest Good.... Civility and decency are secondary values.... We should seek to use [our] values to enforce our order and our orthodoxy, not pretend that they could ever be neutral. To recognize that enmity is real is its own kind of moral duty.[10]

Faith may move mountains, but too slowly for these Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Seen from a certain perspective, the postliberals do get a number of things right. There is a malaise—call it cultural, call it spiritual, call it psychological—in modern Western societies, reflected above all in the worrisome state of our children, who are ever more depressed and suicidal. And we do lack adequate political concepts and vocabulary for articulating and defending the common good and placing necessary limits on individual autonomy, from gun control to keeping Internet pornography from the young. On this many across the political spectrum could agree. What liberal or progressive today would reject Vermeule's argument that "a just state is a state that has ample authority to protect the vulnerable from the ravages of pandemics, natural disasters, and climate change, and from the underlying structures of corporate power that contribute to these events"?[11] He, though, has a developed Catholic theory of government to explain why that is necessarily the case. Do liberals or progressives have one today? I know I don't.

But seen from another perspective, the postliberals offer just one more example of the psychology of self-induced ideological hysteria, which begins with the identification of a genuine problem and quickly mutates into a sense of world-historical crisis and the appointment of oneself and one's comrades as the select called to strike down the Adversary—quite literally in this case. As Vermeule puts it,

> Liberalism's deepest enmity, it seems, is ultimately reserved for the Blessed Virgin—and thus Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 12:1–9, which describe the Virgin's implacable enemy, give us the best clue as to liberalism's true identity.[12]

He means Satan.

The postliberals are stuck in a repetition of mistakes made by many right-wing movements that get so tangled up in their own hyperbolic rhetoric and fanciful historical dramaturgy that they eventually become irrelevant. As long as their focus is on culture wars rather than spreading the Good News, these Catholics will inevitably meet with disappointment in post-Protestant secular America, where even the red-state *demos* demands access to pornography, abortion, and weed. The postliberals will perhaps get their own bookcase in the library of American reaction. But the rest of the American right will eventually be off in search of new symbols and hieroglyphs to dream its dreams.

My concern is for the young people drawn to the movement today. Their unhappiness with the lonely, superficial, and unstable lives our culture and economy offer them does them credit. But finding the true source of our disquiet is never a simple matter, for young or old. It's much easier to become enchanted by historical fairy tales and join a partisan political sect promising redemption from the present than it is to reconcile oneself to never being fully reconciled with life or the historical moment, and to turn within. If I were a believer and were called to preach a sermon to them, I would tell them to continue cultivating their minds and (why not) their souls together, and to leave Washington to the Caesars of this world. And warn them that the political waters surrounding their conservative Mont-Saint-Michels are starting to smell distinctly like a sewer.

Mark Lilla

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1. "Is There Life After Liberalism?," *The New York Times*, January 13, 2018. ↩

2. For a critical challenge to Deneen's view, see Robert Kuttner, "Blaming Liberalism," *The New York Review*, November 21, 2019. ↩

3. “The Terrible American Turn Toward Illiberalism,” *Commentary*, October 2017. ↩

4. Madeleine Teahan, “There Is No Middle Way Between Atheism and Catholi-cism, Says Harvard Professor Who Has Converted,” *Catholic Herald*, October 28, 2016. ↩

5. “All Human Conflict Is Ultimately Theological,” *Church Life Journal*, July 26, 2019. ↩

6. See Adrian Vermeule’s review of Deneen’s *Why Liberalism Failed*, “Integration from Within,” *American Affairs*, Vol 2., No. 1 (Spring 2018). ↩

7. “Liberalism’s Good and Faithful Servants,” *Compact*, February 28, 2023. ↩

8. “Liberalism’s Fear,” in *Integralism and the Common Good*, Vol. 1, edited by P. Edmund Waldstein and Peter A. Kwasniewski (Angelico, 2021), p. 313. ↩

9. See Walter M. Shaub Jr., “The Corruption Playbook,” *The New York Review*, April 18, 2024; and Thomas B. Edsall’s thorough reporting in “Trump’s Backers Are Determined Not to Blow It This Time Around,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 2024. ↩

10. “Against David French-ism,” firstthings.com, May 29, 2019. ↩

11. “Beyond Originalism,” *The Atlantic*, March 31, 2020. ↩

12. “A Christian Strategy,” *First Things*, November 2017. ↩