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JOHN MILBANK'S AND ADRIAN PABST'S *The Politics of Virtue* could be described as the theo-political analogue to Rupert Brooke's *The Soldier*, Blake's *Jerusalem*, and Sir Cecil Spring Rice's *I Vow to Thee my Country* all rolled into one. It pulls no punches and is unashamedly in favor of aristocratic and monarchical forms of government, as well as the establishment of the Church of England. God, Queen, and Country Anglicans who read it are likely to recall the words of Simeon's prayer upon the presentation of the Christ-child: *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace: Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum; Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum: Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.*

Another way to describe it would be a twenty-first-century Tory manifesto or "Blue Labor" handbook. (The difference between the British political classifications "Red Tory" and "Blue Labor" seems to be more a matter of class identity than substantive policy preference). Whether one is an aristocrat with a strong sense of *noblesse oblige*—that is, a Red or Turquoise Tory (turquoise is red combined with green ecological interests)—or a person from a lowlier social position who appreciates the value of an aristocratic element within the social order—a Blue Labor type—the same substantive political positions can be arrived at assuming a common Christian intellectual foundation.

The Politics of Virtue is therefore in the genre of works that offer a critique of liberal political theory from a Christian perspective. It

shares something of the flavor of Alasdair MacIntyre's many publications on the subject, especially the need to reclaim virtue and unmask the confidence tricks and coercive character of liberal ideology. However, where MacIntyre and others have been criticized for offering no alternative to the present liberal political order other than building more monasteries, home schooling children, out-breeding liberals, and praying for another St. Benedict or Joseph Ratzinger (all reasonable strategies in my judgment), Milbank and Pabst have dared to offer some concrete proposals about the structure of political institutions, as well as offering a robust defense of a Christian commonwealth where both politics and economics are rooted in virtuous practices.

While a wave of communitarian and specifically Catholic criticisms of liberalism began to be published in the 1980s, often in response to John Rawls's liberal classic *A Theory of Justice* (1971), at a time when it seemed as though the end-of-history theorists and a chorus of neoconservative Catholics might be right about the triumph of liberalism, and hence the enthusiasm (especially among American Catholics) to quickly baptise it, Milbank's and Pabst's book comes after the outbreak of Islamic terrorism in 2001 and the financial crisis of 2008. They note that both of these events "exposed the limitations of the two liberalisms that have dominated Western politics for the last half-century: the social-cultural liberalism of the left since the 1960s and the economic-political liberalism of the right since the 1980s."[1] The social-cultural liberalism of the left and the economic-political liberalism of the right share the same starting position of a merely negative conception of liberty. A negative conception of liberty is about "freedom from" something, rather than "freedom for" something.

This negative liberty rests on two pillars: "a procedural, formalistic conception of justice and an instrumental notion of reason."[2] The combined result is that "individuals are proclaimed 'autonomous' when all the while they are subjected to the instrumental logic of bureaucratic control and commercial exchange."[3] Worse yet, "the scale of self-worth that the individual is encouraged to adopt is the

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[1]   John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 1.
[2]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 18.
[3]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 19.

very same scale by which she is subjected to mass manipulation."[4] The "double paradox at the heart of liberalism" is therefore the "relentless privatisation of the public sphere and yet the ever-greater invasion of the private sphere, coupled with an oppressive moralism masquerading as liberal impartiality and procedural fairness."[5] Milbank and Pabst strongly affirm the judgment of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek that negative liberty has led to "an explosion of legal and moral rules, an endless procession of legalization and moralization, presented as the fight against all forms of discrimination." Žižek rhetorically asks: "If there are no shared mores in place to influence the law, just the bare fact of subjects 'harassing' other subjects, then who—in the absence of such mores—will decide what counts as harassment"?[6]

Today, Milbank and Pabst conclude that "a new, rootless oligarchy now practises a manipulative populism while holding in contempt the genuine priorities of most people."[7] The Milbank-Pabst solution is the blend of "two older and nobler traditions: a combination of honourable, virtuous elites with greater popular participation; a greater sense of cultural duty and hierarchy of value and honour, alongside much more real equality and genuine creative freedom in the economic and political realms."[8] Included here is a notion of positive liberty as the search for objective truth and substantive goodness. The true and the good, understood as transcendental properties of being, are a magnet for human desire, but they do not force it. Unlike the operation of negative conceptions of liberty, they are not stealthily coercive.

This recipe for a political order based on virtue harkens back to the seventeenth-century division between Whigs and Tories and champions the Tory line of vision. As Milbank and Pabst describe the history:

> The crucial lines of political division appear to have run, after all, not between court and country, but between Whigs and

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[4]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 19.
[5]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 19.
[6]   Slavoj Žižek, "Liberalism and its Discontents," *ABC Religion and Ethics*, October 26, 2012 (http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2012/10/26/3619378.htm), quoted by Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 20.
[7]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 2.
[8]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 1–2.

Tories who were divided over the questions of the legitimacy of the Hanovarian line and the primacy and independence of the Church in the constitution. Just this latter stress rendered the Tory version of commonwealth constitutional politics (remarkably instigated in part by none other than Charles I) more genuinely hospitable towards diverse corporate privileges and to the cultivation of genuinely virtuous roles—architectonically guided by "gentlemen"—within communities of purpose, purposively pursuing a collectively shared end of national and human excellence. By contrast, the Whigs tended to override all inherited rights in the interests of property—demolishing and removing villages, executing youthful deer-stealers and legitimising the ownership even of people.[9]

As Samuel Johnson famously said, the devil was the first Whig!

Milbank and Pabst conclude from this that "at the heart of liberal self-undoing lies the primacy of the economic and the political over the social and thus the subordination of both social bonds and civic ties to the abstract standards of law and contract."[10] This was also the thesis of Karl Polanyi's seminal work *The Great Transformation* (1944). For a historical understanding of the triumph of the economic and political over the social, Polanyi remains a leading authority.

In the United Kingdom, the effect of the Whig ascendency included the replacement of the primacy of kingship as the source of constitutional privileges in favor of a contractual view of power. Virtue and honor got trumped by economic utility. Their rout was aided and abetted by Scottish Calvinist soteriology. In France, a similar social trajectory was fostered by the Jansenist movement, which is often described as Calvinism's Catholic "twin." According to this genealogy, developed in the work of Jean Rohou and endorsed by Milbank and Pabst, liberalism has been promoted by both secularizing hedonists and Christian puritans of both Protestant and Catholic disposition. However, this is only part of the historical jigsaw puzzle.

Added to the unholy alliance of secularist hedonists and Christian puritans, there is another ideological army, the Rousseauian romantics or "*Guardian/New York Times*-reading, granola-eating left Liberals," as Milbank and Pabst describe them. These types invert the pessimism of Thomas Hobbes (the idea that life in the state of nature is nasty,

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9   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 40.
10   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 58.

brutish, and short) and see life in the state of nature as basically good. For these types, the "fall" occurs when one human being enters into a society with other human beings. They are therefore distrustful of what sociologists call "mediating institutions," such as the family, village communities, churches, and local cultural and philanthropic associations. They prefer to locate all power in the state. These "new left" types not only influence political and economic processes but also exert a massive influence over educational institutions. Since they abhor notions of hierarchy and other gradations of excellence, including moral excellence, their understanding of education is nothing like the old Greek *paideia* or the Christian cultivation of the various faculties of the soul, such as intellect, will, imagination, memory, the heart, and so on. Their very thin idea of education is something like the transfer of data from a supplier (formerly a teacher) to a consumer (formerly a student).[11] Their opposition to notions of excellence is so intense they go to war against the idea that some families might be more excellent than others or some forms of human relationships are better than others or some literature or music is superior to other books or other scores. According to these granola-eating left liberals, the greatest sin is to use the human intellect to make value judgments. What they despise is the kind of thoroughly Christian mentality that Jacques Maritain displayed when he wrote that Christian habits, the discipline of the will, and so on are "metaphysical letters patent of nobility." For these types, there can be no nobility, not even of the spirit. Not only do such new left ideologues control most of the humanities departments in the world's elite universities; they are also highly influential in departments of education, family and women's affairs, health, and child welfare.

In their account of the intellectual history of Western civilization, Milbank and Pabst also observe that liberals cannot pretend to have invented values such as freedom, equality, toleration, individual rights, constitutionalism, mixed and balanced government, the rule of law, limits on both state and market power, fair deten-

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[11]   The author is aware that different Catholic theologians recognize different faculties of the human soul and some want to argue that the heart is merely an organ that pumps blood around the body and should not be included in a list of human faculties. The author, however, disagrees with this judgment and follows in the tradition of scholars such as John Henry Newman, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Joseph Ratzinger, for whom the human heart is very much a concept of theological (not merely biological) significance.

tion, fair trial, right to defense, *habeas corpus*, good treatment of the convicted, trial by peers, need of proof for guilt, and requirements for restitution, reparation, and rehabilitation of offenders.[12] These ideas, they emphasize, are all of Greco-Roman or Germanic law or Christian provenance. They suggest that one can have all of them without any recourse to liberal ideology, which is a claim worth serious consideration.

Milbank and Pabst do acknowledge the argument, often presented by American neoconservatives, that nineteenth-century French liberalism *a la* de Tocqueville and Benjamin Constant is not as bad as British liberalism *a la* Hobbes and Locke, but they also argue that even this more benign form of liberalism gives priority to rights over duties and priority to the individual over the community, and thus is part of the noxious inheritance of late-medieval Scholasticism. Not only did late Scholasticism fuel the intellectual rebellion that became known as Protestantism, thus destroying the unity of Western Christendom and its sacramental cosmology; the late medieval notions of univocity (the denial of inherently different qualitative degrees within being), nominalism (the denial of the reality of universal modes of existence), and voluntarism (the insistence that divine and then created will is the primary determinant of reality) also reverberated through the field of politics. In the intellectual history recounted by several scholars from the Radical Orthodoxy stable (not just Milbank and Pabst), this trilogy of intellectual falls creates the slippery slope that ends with the liberalism of Rawls and other theorists who deny the existence of any substantive good. Rawls famously said that, if a man wants to spend his life counting blades of grass, then that *is the good life for him* and no one can stand on the outside of this decision and judge it to be a complete waste of the gift of life.

While thus acknowledging that some instantiations of liberal political theory may be better or worse than others, Milbank and Pabst nonetheless argue that, whatever good the more benign forms of liberalism may permit, this good is never stable. In particular, it is vulnerable to Hobbesian arguments about the freedom of the individual being best served by strong, centralized governments.[13] The better of the nineteenth-century's theories expect "tradition" (understood in something like a Burkean sense as long-standing social mores) to do the social cohesion work previously undertaken by the Christian

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[12]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 29.
[13]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 32–34.

and Neoplatonic metaphysics of participation that was destroyed by the trio of univocity, nominalism, and voluntarism, mentioned above. However, Burkean notions of tradition have proven to be powerless before the waves of Nietzschean deconstruction.

Milbank and Pabst also dismiss the idea that the Renaissance republican tradition, with its secularist conception of virtue, is a serious contender as a solution to the crisis of contemporary liberalism. They argue that the price of the secularization of virtue in Machiavelli is a "re-primitivisation and re-paganisation which returns virtue understood as *virtù* to its etymological root of male aggressive prowess" and renders modern virtue "proximate to liberal norms, whose formal negativity is predicated on the latent violence of an assumed initial lack of consensus."[14] In summary:

> Under the aegis of liberalism, the realm of society is corroded from two opposite directions. On the one hand, everything human is declared only natural—we are a bunch of greedy apes with bigger brains. On the other hand, everything human is declared entirely artificial, just stuff that we have made up such as the social contract, which reflects nothing other than the arbitrary whims of human volition and can be simply undone by other acts of will. In this way, liberalism tends to make the human vanish in two directions: first, archaically in the face of the tide of pre-human nature by appealing to the lowest instincts such as greed, fearfulness and enmity; second, futuristically, in favour of a "post-human" project that can hopefully subordinate human egotism and the unpredictabilities of desire to a cybernetic future that will augment the liberal "peace of a sort" into an absolute bio-politics. In this way, the consummation of liberalism's inevitable utilitarian inversion ushers in a phase of history that is both post-democratic and post-humanist.[15]

Milbank and Pabst conclude that the history of the century (1914–2014) suggests that, "if the state does not acknowledge the need to be guided by higher principles than power or wealth, then one of two consequences will ensure: either the state invests politics and the economy with quasi-sacred significance, like Fascism,

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[14]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 37.
[15]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 58.

Communism and Neo-liberalism, or else the state ends up adopting a political religion with theocratic tendencies."[16] Like MacIntyre, William Cavanaugh, David L. Schindler, and several other leading Catholic scholars, Milbank and Pabst declare the liberal tradition to be flawed *in its foundations*. They therefore seek to re-weave the fabric of the social tapestry that got torn apart by the successive waves of univocity, nominalism, and voluntarism and to rescue what remains intact of the tapestry and give it a new lease on life with some strong arguments in favor of its superiority over liberal social forms.[17]

Their concrete proposals include directly electing mayors, affirming local government and regional identities, reviving the old guild-halls, reforming the Privy Council so that it is not merely another arm of the executive branch of government, reforming the House of Lords so that it becomes a House of a diverse array of social and professional elites, reforming the House of Commons by getting rid of the simple "first past the post" principle, allowing for some of the larger electorates to return more than one Member of Parliament and bringing in other changes to break up the monopoly of the two-party system, and finally, establishing more Royal Colleges for a wider range of vocations.

In relation to the reform of the House of Lords, it is recommended that hereditary peers be included, not dropped, and that their role should include a special brief for ecological guardianship. Precisely how this might look in practice is not developed, but one thinks of Prince Charles's many projects to promote the economic viability of the British villages and to protect the countryside from being destroyed by philistine property developers. It is probably this kind of work that Milbank and Pabst have in mind. There has always been a close association between the National Trust and the aristocracy. Both try to preserve the natural and cultural treasures of the United Kingdom.

Milbank and Pabst want to retain the aristocratic element in British society and to affirm all the good community work that many of the aristocratic families already do, especially in the fields of ecological and cultural treasure preservation. Above all, they want the Royal Family to have a significant political role and not be reduced

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[16]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 234.
[17]   The "re-weaving the tapestry" metaphor is taken from the title of Hans Boersma's book *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

to a "mere ceremonial apex upon a capitalist spectacle." They argue that missing from contemporary liberal democracies are "genuine elites"—"virtuous inspirers and architectonic leaders that act honourably and lead by example in all sectors of society."[18] They further argue that there needs to be a symbolization of the pursuit of the good at a hierarchical summit.[19] The monarchy serves this purpose, which they describe in the following terms:

> The personal role of the monarch exceeds the impersonal forces of the nation, the state or the market, reminding us at the top that the entire edifice of structure and process is in the end a human worker, a human emergence, dependent on an amalgam of private human decisions. For this reason, monarchy can today symbolically and actively uphold the sanctity of labour (human beings are first and foremost works), land (the shared commons) and life (the dignity of the human person). The House of Windsor has to some degree already, and commendably, started to take on this international role—even if it could be greatly extended, to potential global benefit, potentially somewhat reviving at a supranational level the lapsed (but arguably theo-politically indispensable) role of the Holy Roman Emperor in the older polity of Christendom.[20]

The pair even go so far as to refer to the "Christological mediation" of the British monarch, who is "answerable to a higher authority than simply his own private inner conscience."[21] As Roger Trigg explains:

> In England, the Cross on top of the Crown, coupled with the symbolism of the Coronation service, demonstrate the fact that temporal power is not the final source of authority, but is itself answerable to a higher Power. The Queen, personifying all government in this land, is subject to principles and standards that are not the making of herself or her ministers. All are under the ultimate judgment of the God who created all. Denying that is to make something else, whether the interest of

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18   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 205
19   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 219.
20   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 40.
21   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 219.

the stronger, or the fickle will of the people, an untrustworthy guide.[22]

Such an exhortation in favor of monarchical forms of government is rarely to be found in contemporary Anglophone Catholic literature, with the notable exception of the works of the English Dominican Aidan Nichols. As Robert P. Kraynak has noted, according to thinkers like Nichols, "the deficiency of democratic and republican forms is the inability to sustain the high culture and civic piety that monarchical and aristocratic forms once cultivated as a matter of course and that helped to sustain a Christian civilisation with loftier aspirations than bourgeois culture."[23] Nonetheless, perhaps because of the lingering Fenian influence in Anglophone Catholicism, the natural Catholic affinity for some form of Christian monarchy is far less pronounced in Anglophone publications than it is in French publications. A contemporary joke is that the French College in Rome is politically divided between the *Légitimistes* and *Orléanistes*, the absolute monarchists and the constitutional monarchists. Republicans, apparently, are nowhere to be found. Although it is hard to believe that a few Gaullists have not slipped through the net somewhere, the caricature is not hard to believe, since the Republican tradition in France is so notoriously anti-Catholic. The memory of the Republican suppression of the Vendée, not merely the Republican defeat of the Royal and Catholic Army, but the wholesale genocide of the civilian population, women and babies included, runs so deep in French Catholic culture that it makes a "baptism" of the French revolution very difficult. The English historian Simon Schama has described the suppression of the Vendée in 1793 as the first example of genocide in modern history. Even the largest buckets of holy water are inadequate to heal the lesion caused by the murder of some hundreds of thousands of people, including the so-called Republican "baptisms," or deliberate drowning, in the Loire River. Famously, the only uniform of those peasants and aristocrats who together formed the Royal and Catholic Army was a cloth badge in the shape of the Sacred Heart sewn into their shirts.

Recently, the memory of the heroism of the Vendeans was recalled by Cardinal Robert Sarah, whose home is the former French colony

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22   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 219.
23   Robert P. Kraynak, *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy: God and Politics in a Fallen World* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 233.

of Guinea. He described advocates of abortion and population control in Africa as being like the Republican revolutionaries who massacred the people of the Vendée, and he rhetorically asked: "Who will dare to confront the modern persecutors of the Church? Who will have the courage to rise up without any weapons other than the rosary and the Sacred Heart, to face the columns of death of our time?" He further described the "columns of death" as relativism, indifferentism, and contempt for God. He said that the contemporary revolutionaries, like the revolutionary Republicans, want to exterminate families. He predicted that Africa, like the Vendée, will resist, and he exhorted the French people to do the same. He concluded with the statement: "My friends, the blood of martyrs flows in your veins, be faithful to it! We are all spiritually sons of la Vendée martyrs."[24]

While Milbank, Pabst, and Nichols agree about many aspects of the argument in favor of the British monarchy, where they differ is over the significance of the Church of England. Quite simply, Nichols, on the one hand, and Milbank and Pabst, on the other, offer two different meta-narratives about the place of the Church of England in British history. According to Milbank and Pabst, "after Henry VIII's break with Rome, the Church of England eventually sought to preserve the balance between priesthood and monarchy that reflects the patristic and medieval emphasis on Christ's priestly and kingly authority."[25] According to Nichols:

> With the Protestant Reformation—first Henrician-Edwardine and then, after the intermezzo of Mary's reign, Elizabethan— the English Crown (in Parliament or not as the case may be) destroyed the relative autonomy of *sacerdotium* in its relation to *regnum*. In Western Christendom that autonomy had always been guaranteed in principle, however fluctuating it was in practice, by the "de-centredness" of the national Church which recognised the chief seat of ecclesial authority in the See of Rome. . . . The English reformation was, then, the action of the Crown in establishing control over the Church, far more fully than in the Middle Ages and with a systematic repudia-

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[24]   Nick Hallet, "Cardinal Sarah: The New Revolutionaries are Trying to Destroy the Christian Family," *The Catholic Herald*, August 16, 2017, catholicherald. co.uk/news/2017/08/16/cardinal-sarah-the-new-revolutionaries-are-trying-to-destroy-the-christian-family/.

[25]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 233.

tion of the claims of the See of Rome. Within this broadish framework much that was Catholic could survive, but in a form vulnerable to theological fashion, political events and—in the setting of mass democracy in the twentieth century—cultural trends.[26]

Milbank and Pabst defend the established position of the Church of England and argue that the political role of the established Church is "neither to sanctify the state nor to supplant the government as elected and representative, but, rather, to 'inform' public institutions in the direction of both individual virtue and public honour, without which democracy cannot function or thrive."[27] The Church of England is also praised for sustaining a parish system that helps to structure and coordinate local life in diverse ways.[28] Other faiths, they suggest, can come to occupy the same space in a "quasi-established fashion." Specific mention is made of the Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic faiths in this context.

Notwithstanding this offer to somehow "share the space," we are still left with an *Act of Settlement* that precludes the monarch from ever being a Catholic and we have the Church of England occupying property that was taken from the Catholic Church in a civil war that destroyed almost all the Benedictine monasteries. The monastic treasure and property was plundered by the crown and often distributed to socially significant families who would support Henry's cause. The parish structure that currently offers tea and sympathy across the villages of the Kingdom pre-dates the Church of England. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were Catholic territories for some 1,000 years before Henry VIII had a fight with Pope Clement VII about divorce and remarriage. Bishop John Fisher, the Lord High Chancellor Sir Thomas More, and some of the best and brightest men and women of the Kingdom went to the gallows because they refused to accept Henry's new morality.

In one place, Milbank and Pabst observe that "to do something wrong is also to do something badly, to botch things up in a way that is bound sooner or later (even if decades or centuries later) to fail,

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26 Aidan Nichols, *The Realm: An Unfashionable Essay on the Conversion of England* (Oxford, UK: Family Publications, 2007), 51–52.
27 Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 232.
28 Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 238.

because vices are hard to sustain and ultimately self-defeating."[29] The fundamental difference of Milbank and Pabst from Catholic monarchists is that the Catholics believe that Henry VIII and those social climbers who supported him got something wrong and botched things up and so his project is bound to fail, even if centuries later, because, as they say, vices are hard to sustain and ultimately self-defeating.

The "vice" at the root of the Church of England is its weak moral theology, beginning with Henry's attack on the indissolubility of marriage. It is precisely the area of sexual morality and the theological significance of gender distinctions that today is most definitive of the difference between the Catholic Church and the Church of England. Edmund Adamus has gone so far as to argue that it is precisely because of decisions made by Church of England leaders in the twentieth century in these fields that London has become, in his judgment, "the epicentre of the culture of death." Adamus traces the contemporary culture of death to the decision of the Lambeth Conference of 1930 to permit contraception, thereby accepting a severance of the procreative from the unitive dimensions of human sexuality. In his "The Body's Grace" lecture, Dr. Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, acknowledged that this decision about contraception had, as a matter of logic, opened the gate to an acceptance of homosexuality, though he does not see this as a problem.

In the context of a discussion about liberalism's failure to recognize the existence of the human soul, Milbank and Pabst refer to Belgium's euthanasia laws as an instance of the triumph of what St. John Paul II called a "culture of death."[30] A whole doctoral thesis could be written on the subject of whether London or Leuven (home of the "Catholic" University where a philosophy professor was recently sacked for presenting a prolife argument to his students) is the epicentre of the culture of death.[31] Indeed, one may well conclude that London is the epicenter of the culture of death in its Protestant form and Leuven in its Catholic form. Whatever of that issue, the fact is that, from a Catholic perspective, Milbank's and Pabst's anti-liberalism is not quite anti-liberal enough, since they have missed drilling down to one of the major roots of Britain's social decay—the botched jobs of the Henrician and Elizabethan "root canal fillings" as they manifest

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[29]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 6.
[30]   Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 274.
[31]   Tom Heneghan, "Catholic University in Belgium Sacks Lecturer Who Called Abortion 'the Murder of an Innocent Person,'" *The Tablet*, April 10, 2017.

themselves today in the almost complete failure of the Church of England's leaders to offer any kind of intellectual and spiritual resistance to the sexual revolution of the 1960s. As many have noted, today it is neither the Anglo-Catholics nor the Calvinists who dominate the Church of England, but the liberal party. Thomas Howard in his "Lead Kindly Light" interview summed up the situation in the following terms:

> The Anglicanism/Episcopalianism of today differs violently from the Church (of England) into which I was received in l960. Back then, the worst feature of the Anglican communion was sheer Modernism, which had taken over 100% of the seminaries in the U.S., and 19% of the parishes and priests. But now, that Modernism (springing as it did from l9th century German biblical criticism whose axiom was that miracles don't occur, hence the Bible is a tissue of fairy tales) has reached its tentacles into the moral realm, and, whereas most Episcopal clergy back then would have vaguely espoused the general tradition of Western decency, now they are loud and vicious in their insistence on re-drawing the moral map of the universe. It is an inevitable development, but nonetheless shocking and dismaying.[32]

In the final analysis, *The Politics of Virtue* may well become as influential as MacIntyre's *After Virtue* or Rawls's *Theory of Justice*. It is certainly a powerful critique of the crisis of modern liberalism and the economic and cultural orders it has engendered. In these most unaristocratic times, when the liberal tradition now takes the form of a totalitarian intolerance of almost all standards of excellence, Queen Elizabeth II is a quietly dignified counter-force. She is also arguably the most widely respected world leader today. She has taken her coronation oath to defend the Christian faith in the countries of her realm seriously, even though, by Catholic standards, she has not been as heroic as King Baudouin of Belgium, who abdicated for a day rather than have his name attached to pro-abortion legislation, or Archduke Henri of Luxembourg, who refused to have his name associated with pro-euthanasia legislation. Queen Elizabeth II is often held up as the quintessential example of a servant leader, since she has devoted

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[32] Thomas Howard, "Lead Kindly Light," ignatiusinsight.com/features/thoward_intrvw_oct04.asp.

decades of her life to self-sacrificial public service. British Common-wealth Catholics who care about the Christian fabric of their nations should be natural supporters of the monarchy. However, this does not mean that they have to give up on the project of restoring the "old faith" in the British Isles. Rather, they should rally behind the cause of the Servant of God Fr. Ignatius Spencer, great-great-great uncle of Diana, the Princess of Wales, and pray for the conversion of the British crown.

There is a story that, when Bishop Ullathorne of Birmingham, who was a lineal descendent of St. Thomas More, had a meeting with St. John Vianney in 1854, Vianney said to Ullathorne: "Monseigneur, I believe that the Church in England will one day be restored to her former glory." If only the British Catholic bishops were to believe this and pray for it and encourage Her Majesty's Catholic subjects to do the same! Until such time, however, scholars like Milbank and Pabst and their Catholic sympathizers need to work together against all those forces who seek to snuff out every spark of grace and nobility in what Shakespeare called "the sceptred isle."   N&V