

parochial schools to become a redoubt for white families fleeing public schools. More conflict arose with his sponsorship of low-income housing projects, culminating in a group of suburban parishioners from Scituate suing the archdiocese in 1978. Though the archdiocese prevailed in court, Medeiros quixotically agreed to have the case heard again by a tribunal, which sided with the parishioners. The project was scuttled.

Indeed the composite portrait Gribble paints yields sharp contrasts—a leader committed to social justice but convinced that secularizing society was in the throes of moral decline, and who recognized the post-conciliar era would be marked by uncertainty; a bishop committed to serving the poor whose desire for consensus frustrated equitable sharing of material resources. Gribble renders judgment: “He had to contend with the divide between those who are fundamentally conservative in their religious perspective and those who are basically liberal” (228).

In an understatement Gribble writes, “His legacy was in many ways crafted within the context of conditions beyond his control” (318). The tone of the biography is set by the social context surrounding Medeiros—one of decline and division in which more than piety was required. Medeiros clearly had organizational talent, but he was not strong in standing up to those Catholics dedicated to preserving a white-dominated Catholic pre-Vatican II enclave. Gribble’s well-researched volume provides a complicated assessment of a bishop caught between pre-conciliar and post-conciliar worlds. Unfortunately, the volume is marred by typographical errors throughout. Despite this shortcoming the book is recommended for scholars specializing in the histories of the U.S. Catholic Church during the 1970s, post-conciliar race relations in the Church, and Catholicism in Boston.

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***Bad Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right.* By Randall Balmer. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021. xix + 120 pp. \$16.99 hardcover.**

At only eighty-eight small pages of text with generous spacing and wide margins, *Bad Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right* is a book many readers could plausibly finish in one sitting. This is no virtue; its pithiness only compounds the book’s weaknesses. *Bad Faith* puts forth a provocative thesis, arguing that racism, not abortion, was the primary catalyst in forming the Religious Right. Unfortunately, substantiating such a bold claim demands far more evidence and historiographic engagement than its author, Dartmouth College professor Randall Balmer, provides in this slim volume. Absent such evidence and engagement, readers are instead too often made to settle for anecdotal recollections and unsupported assertions in Balmer’s attempt to demonstrate that “the real roots of the Religious Right lay not in the defense of a fetus but in the defense of racial segregation” (65). To be sure, Balmer’s memories and claims are crisp and engaging—the hallmark of many of the esteemed scholar’s prolific writings. But, in the end, all of Balmer’s literary prowess cannot rescue *Bad Faith* from the book’s problematic framing and reductionist conclusions.

*Bad Faith* opens with its origins. The book was born at a 1990 conference where Balmer heard a founding father of the Religious Right, Paul Weyrich, admit that “abortion had nothing whatsoever to do with the emergence of the Religious Right” (xii). In a private follow-up conversation, Weyrich further recalled to Balmer that evangelicals only became politically active in the 1970s when “the Internal Revenue Service began to challenge the tax-exempt status of racially segregated schools” (xii). Contrary to the Religious Right’s “most cherished and durable myth” (31)—that protecting unborn babies drove evangelical political activism in the final decades of the twentieth century, Weyrich’s confessions suggested a more nefarious impetus behind the Religious Right: maintaining all-white segregation academies. Weyrich’s assertions “struck [Balmer] as credible” because the latter “[did not] recall abortion being a topic of conversation in evangelical circles” of which he was a part during the Religious Right’s ascendancy (xiii). *Bad Faith* is Balmer’s effort to prove Weyrich’s claims true. Unfortunately, the history Balmer produces in this quest relies more on a problematic historical narrative of Balmer’s own telling than it does on established scholarship in American religious history, especially as such history relates to the American South.

Following the book’s introduction, for example, Balmer’s first section breezily describes nineteenth-century evangelicals, driven by postmillennial zeal, as agents of social reform. Their concern for the marginalized and oppressed in American society caused these early evangelicals to advocate even “for the poor and for the rights of women” (6–7). Balmer explains that these evangelical social reformers successfully shaped the conscience of the nation—especially regarding the issue of slavery, even going so far as to claim that evangelicals’ persistent antislavery stance “eventually drove an angry South to secession” (10). Balmer laments that the imperatives of these nineteenth-century believers “[stand] in marked contrast to the agenda of the Religious Right” (6). It is understandable why Balmer would choose to frame his telling of evangelical history in this way. After all, Balmer wants his reader see evangelicalism as a movement betrayed. In Balmer’s telling, there was a period when evangelicals were concerned with noble things and held admirable values before “a mutant form of evangelicalism inconsistent with the best traditions of evangelicalism itself” (79) emerged from the Religious Right. The problem with Balmer’s betrayal narrative is that it is largely undermined by scholarship on southern evangelicals. Certainly, there were nineteenth-century evangelicals who advocated for women’s rights and called for slavery’s end. But as well-known scholars such as Stephanie McCurry and Mark Noll—and dozens of others—have shown, there were plenty of evangelicals in the South who argued for subjugating women and who waged the deadliest war in American history to defend slavery precisely *because* of their theological commitments. *Bad Faith* attempts to frame the Religious Right as a mutated betrayal of the evangelical tradition. But there is a mountain of evidence—of which a scholar of Balmer’s stature is surely aware—that suggests the Religious Right’s concern with controlling women and people of color may equally be understood as a continuing thread in evangelicalism inherent to the movement itself.

In another questionable interpretive framing, Balmer argues that a growing tide of premillennial eschatology, coupled with social embarrassment brought on by the 1925 Scopes trial, caused American evangelicals to abandon their previous social reform efforts and retreat into an “insular and enveloping” subculture in the early twentieth century (18). Balmer suggests that evangelicals within this subculture “during the middle decades of the twentieth century . . . were largely apolitical” (18), and the only evangelicals who engaged in politics were “fringe characters” (19). While he offers no

evidence for such claims aside from an oblique appeal to his experience growing up evangelical (18), at the end of his book Balmer does point those interested in further reading to Daniel K. Williams's *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012) (113). Williams's book is a curious suggestion coming from Balmer, as it is a direct refutation of the canard Balmer is advancing—that twentieth century evangelicals were apolitical until the Religious Right came along in the 1970s. Williams is not a lone voice in the historiography on this point. Scholars such as Darren Dochuck have won prestigious awards for meticulously detailing how, contrary to Balmer's memories, evangelicals in fact were politically active and organizing decades before the Religious Right emerged. Meanwhile, scholars such as Carolyn Dupont have demonstrated how southern white evangelicals were engaged politically to fight against civil rights reforms throughout the South as early as the late 1940s.

Balmer's failure to incorporate the work of scholars like Dupont into his analysis is particularly perplexing. For a book arguing that racism rather than reproductive rights motivated evangelical political action, scholarship demonstrating the longer history of a racialized evangelicalism would have bolstered Balmer's argument. But this neglect raises another, and perhaps most consequential, problem with *Bad Faith*: its overly reductionist explanation of the rise of the Religious Right. While race unquestionably played a role in the political resurgence of conservative evangelicals in the 1970s, it by no means was the singular cause Balmer portrays it as being in this book. Evangelical Christians were upset that the federal government began intervening in their private schools, to be sure. But as scholars from Rick Perlstein to Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields to William Martin—the latter's book also appears as suggested reading at the end of Balmer's book—have exhaustively shown, evangelicals by the 1970s were also concerned about feminism, secular humanism, and gay rights. And yes, some were even concerned about abortion. But rather than putting his work in conversation with the burgeoning scholarship on this topic in a way that would more fully explain the rise and continuing influence of the Religious Right, Balmer has written an overly simplistic tale that, while making for a quick and accessible read, is simply unsupported by current scholarship. Bad faith indeed.

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***The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico: Neil Connolly's Priesthood in the South Bronx.* By Angel Garcia. New York: Fordham University Press, 2020. 365 pp. \$38.00 hardcover.**

In *The Kingdom Began in Puerto Rico*, longtime community organizer Angel Garcia traces the community-level reception of Vatican II through the eyes of legendary South Bronx priest Neil A. Connolly. Readers meet Connolly at his ordination in 1958, after which he traveled to Ponce, Puerto Rico, with a group from the Archdiocese of New York for an eight-week cultural and linguistic immersion. The immersion was coordinated by the Institute for Intercultural Communication at the Catholic University of