regard, as responsibility for these solutions would move from the constitutional/political realm to the arena of the group and the locality. A healthy recovery of the “separation of powers” doctrine and a greater accepting of responsibility on the part of all branches (but, perhaps most of all, Congress) would undoubtedly form an essential part of the solution.

In the wake of a presidency that made extensive use of executive orders for policy implementation and at the dawn of another that sees similar utility in using presidential quasi-law to reshape national policy, Frohnen and Carey’s work is a timely and appropriate warning of the dangers of sacrificing the rule of law for the effective pursuit of political solutions.

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Catholics have long occupied an awkward position in American politics. They were often the subject of discrimination and suspicion by the Protestant majority, but eventually found a political home in the Democratic Party, particularly as part of the urban political machines that exchanged government jobs and services for votes. For many twentieth-century American Catholics, voting for the Democratic Party was almost as much an article of faith as weekly Mass attendance.

All that changed, however, in the wake of the 1973 Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade. Lay and clerical Catholic leaders had supported the civil rights movement and the nation’s anticommunist foreign policy—both key elements of the Democratic Party platform since the late 1940s—but Roe’s definition of abortion as a right drove a wedge between Democratic Party leaders and American Catholics. Other issues would lead Catholics to vote for Republicans with greater frequency, but it is not too much to suggest that abortion helped to drive Catholics into the arms of the Republican Party.

Abortion has been a central issue in American Catholic politics for over forty years now, and James Hitchcock has provided an insightful review of those decades. He does not provide a comprehensive history of Catholic politics in this period, although it touches on major political developments affecting American Catholics, but it particularly focuses on disputes among American Catholics over the issue of abortion. Hitch-
cock presents those disputes as a battle between the “Catholic left” and “Catholic right” (his terms) in America. To give his study focus, Hitchcock operationalizes these adversarial positions as interpretations and opinions expressed in two lay-edited Catholic newspapers: the “Catholic left” is shown through the pages of the *National Catholic Reporter*, while the “Catholic right” is viewed primarily through *The Wanderer*. Most of the book is taken up with a detailed examination of how these publications (and the readers whose letters were published in them) viewed political events and developments in years from the 1970s to today. The primary focus of this examination is the issue of abortion, but by necessity many other issues of the times are also reviewed.

What stands out clearly in Hitchcock’s study is how politics, indeed, political ideology, has dominated the thinking of both the “left” and “right” as it has been expressed in the *Reporter* and *The Wanderer*. One would expect Catholics of any political stripe to embrace and support the pro-life movement, yet Hitchcock demonstrates compellingly how other considerations trump the cause of life. As he summarizes the positions of these papers, *The Wanderer* “had an agenda that promoted conspiratorial economic theories, demonized the state of Israel, and sought to rekindle long-dead ethnic rivalries” (184). The paper “could not bring itself to embrace the ecumenical nature of the pro-life movement” (184). As for the *Reporter*, it has embraced the Catholic left’s devotion to “left-wing politics, the sexual revolution, and a revolt against the hierarchical Church” (184). It has willingly played the role of “decrying the ‘extremism’ of the Church, continually flogging the Catholic hierarchy for resisting the secular liberal consensus . . . [and] appealing to Catholics who find it impossible to take moral positions different from that consensus” (189). Putting ideology first has led *The Wanderer* to grow enthusiastic about fringe politicians such as Ron Paul, while the *Reporter* made excuses for the pro-abortion and secularist agenda of the Obama Administration.

What is also clear from Hitchcock’s extensive documentation of the two publications’ positions is how easy it is for Catholics to succumb to some of the worst pathologies of political conflict over ideas. For that is what the issues of abortion and religious freedom are ultimately about: ideas about the nature of human life, human dignity, and human freedom. In contests over these ideas, partisans are tempted to give in to certain pathological temptations rather than really engage their adversaries over the issues. For Catholics, there are four such temptations: tribalism, showing more mercy to infidels than heretics, making the perfect the enemy of the good, and forgetting that His Kingdom is not of this world. Hitch-
cock’s study does not itself describe the problem this way, but it nicely illustrates the effects of succumbing to these temptations.

Tribalism is the tendency to view the world in terms of “us versus them.” Hitchcock’s survey of the Catholic “left” and “right” provides ample evidence of such tribalism. The Reporter repeatedly demonstrated contempt for those—especially those on the “right”—who are not as enlightened; it is the sort of self-satisfied smugness that is familiar to anyone who works in higher education in America today. As for The Wanderer, its tribalism is manifest in suspicion and hostility toward those who are not of the same mindset, even suggesting (quite subtly) that those outside the paper’s tribe risk eternal damnation.

A related temptation seems to contradict tribalism, but is really an extension of it. It is the tendency to show more mercy to “infidels” than “heretics.” In other words, The Wanderer and the Reporter have been more inclined to forgive non-Catholics (and anti-Catholics) for their excesses than those Catholics who come to a different political conclusion.

Another tendency among ideological combatants is to make the perfect the enemy of the good. They forget that politics is the art of the possible. It requires compromise and its victories are more often incremental than transformative. Hitchcock shows how both the “left” and “right” have acted as if they could get all of what they wanted, and would rather have nothing than partial success, because making compromises is defined as betrayal of principle rather than prudence. The sanctity of life is non-negotiable for Catholics, but Evangelium Vitae explained that eliminating threats to life may require incremental political action.

Finally, both sides have repeatedly acted as if His Kingdom is of this world. Both papers often portrayed the stakes in political events as the only things that matter; as if there is nothing beyond this world. That kind of thinking cannot be called Catholic, regardless of whether it comes from the “left” or the “right.”

Professor Hitchcock’s study details how two leading Catholic lay publications have let ideological considerations triumph over authentic Catholicism in the post-Roe era. It is a valuable document that helps to explain the current situation of Catholics in American politics.

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