



Injury as Destiny

Thomas More and the healing of the Catholic right

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. David Albertson and Jason Blakely reference Sohrab Ahmari, Matthew Walther, and Tucker Carlson as examples of high-profile, pro-MAGA Christian thought leaders who have recently disavowed Trump. Have you ever rescinded or altered a strong social or political belief? What led to that change?
2. The authors suggest that people are drawn to the MAGA movement because it provides some type of consolation or refuge from fear. Why do you think Trump appears (or did appear) as a comforting figure for so many Americans?
3. Albertson and Blakely state that “ideology taps into the deepest recesses of the human psyche,” and identify resentment as a key motif of Trumpism. Has resentment ever motivated you to act? Why did that emotion prevail?
4. The article outlines the series of political losses Catholic conservatives suffered that led to a “furious appetite for some kind of restoration, even if it required moral compromise or political violence.” In politics, there will always be winners and losers. How can we prevent losing groups from wielding built-up resentment and sustained hatred as a political tool in the future?
5. Albertson and Blakely reference St. Thomas More, a leading Christian intellectual who faced King Henry VIII’s political corruption of Catholic identity in England. More suggests that fear, in the face of rising authoritarianism, can degrade our political discernment and ability to make difficult moral decisions. Where do you see fear corrupting people in that way today? Can it be avoided?
6. Extensive reference is made to Nietzsche’s theory of ressentiment. In the authors’ discussion, it forms a paradox: “On the one hand, Trumpism exudes resentment, and the Catholic right is attracted to that tone. Naturally, Nietzsche would be unsurprised, because he thinks Christianity is, at its core, nothing more than pure resentment. At the same time, Trumpism embraces the will-to-power of a vulgar Nietzscheanism that seems to leave all morality behind.” What do you make of this paradox? Why or why isn’t Nietzsche right in his assessment of Christianity? Have you experienced the type of Christianity that Nietzsche describes?
7. What do you make of Max Scheler’s categories of the “romantic” and the “apostate” in comparison to the model of the saint and martyr? What’s compelling and dissatisfying about each of them, and what do they say about Christianity?
8. The article suggests that leaving MAGA behind and recovering from the wounds of Trumpism (whether you were a supporter or not) “will require a different vision of what it means to be a Christian.” What does that vision of Christianity look like? Where have you seen that vision lived out? How does it differ from a MAGA Christianity?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Matt McManus, “The Serpent in the Garden,” July/August 2026: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/mcmanus-woods-cultural-marxism-adorno-marcuse-aja>

Matt McManus, “Big Ideas, No Scruples,” February 2026: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/big-ideas-no-scruples>

Jason Blakely, “The Integralism of Adrian Vermeule,” October 2020: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/hot-catholic-enough>

Dennis J. Wieboldt III, “Outwitting the Anti-Catholics,” March 2026: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/parental-rights-catholicism-schools-supreme-court-wieboldt>

Paul Moses, “What the FBI ‘Anti-Catholic’ Memo Gets Right,” March 9, 2023:
<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/Catholic-fbi-radical-traditionalists-garland-seraphin-antisemitism>