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Chapter X The Persistence of White Christian Patriarchy in a Time of Right-Wing Populism

Esther McIntosh

Abstract: In 2016, two unexpected election results shook the US and the UK: the successful presidential campaign of Donald Trump and the victory of leave campaigners in Britain. Commentary on both events highlighted the anti-immigration rhetoric and the rise of populism: the kind of populism that seeks to mobilize the ‘common’ people against the privileged elites and those deemed to be unwanted outsiders. What was missing from the majority of pre- and post-election coverage was feminist analysis of the patriarchal nature of the campaigns and their impact on women, especially religious women. By drawing on available reports of both election campaigns and views expressed by mainstream and fringe Christian leaders and theologians, this chapter explores the underlying misogyny that led to large numbers of White evangelical women voting for President Trump, despite his openly sexist and racist behavior, and against the growth of the hashtag #whitechurchquiet. Likewise, male voices in political and Christian circles dominated in the lead up to the UK’s referendum on EU membership; yet, women are more likely to suffer from the impacts of post-Brexit austerity and the rise in religious hate crime. Hence, this chapter considers the gendered implications of Christian rhetoric and theology in Britain, including that of current Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and its impact on Muslim women in particular. The chapter concludes that the persistence of White Christian patriarchy and its entanglement with right-wing populism (including QAnon conspiracy theories) is evident in responses to Black Lives Matter protests and COVID-19, and, yet, is clearly at odds with liberation theology’s preferential option for poor.

Keywords: Trump, Brexit, patriarchy, feminism, Johnson

In 2016, two unexpected election results shook the US and the UK (or, rather, the results horrified half of the population and delighted the other half): Donald Trump became President of the US and Britons voted to leave the European Union in a referendum spearheaded by the UK Independence Party and Nigel Farage (now leader of the Brexit Party/Reform UK). Media and political commentary on both the presidential election campaign in the US and the leave campaign in the UK made frequent references to the rise of populism. Populism can, of course, be left-wing or right-wing and can take many forms from militarism to pacifism, conservatism to socialism. From an examination of contemporary populist movements, Dutch political scientist, Cas Mudde, defines populism as: “*an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus the ‘corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general*

will) of the people.”¹ He notes that these movements are frequently facilitated by a charismatic leader, who claims to stand with the people and against the establishment, challenging taboos and capitalizing on a perceived threat to a particular way of life.² In other words, contemporary populist parties claim to be speaking on behalf of the “silent majority” who feel threatened by government regulation, culture change, and incoming migrants.³

We do not have to look very hard to find evidence of these markers in the rhetoric used by Donald Trump and Nigel Farage. Trump’s campaign slogan “Make America Great Again” suggested a nostalgia for a lost way of life; his promise to “drain the swamp” implied that there is corruption at the heart of government; his promise to “build a wall” portrayed immigrants as threatening the way of life for resident Americans; while his attack on the establishment included inciting the “lock her up” chant aimed at Hillary Clinton and the accusation that journalists pedal “fake news” and are “the enemy of the American people.”⁴ Despite being a billionaire, Trump portrays himself as an outsider in relation to the corrupt elite and, therefore, is viewed by supporters as a spokesman for the forgotten people.⁵

Similarly, Farage glosses over his background as a merchant banker, preferring to be pictured in a pub with a pint of ale. His supporters claim that he is “in touch with” and “stands up for ordinary people”;⁶ in fact, he referred to UKIP supporters and now refers to Brexiteers

¹ Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” *Government and Opposition*, 39:4 (2004), 541-563, at 543 (italics in the original). ‘People’ is a vague term and may only refer to a particular group.

² Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” 545-554. He explains: “*perceptions* seem to be more important than *facts*” (Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” 553, italics in the original).

³ Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” 557. These populists do not want to overthrow liberal democracy; they intend a form of democracy that is more illiberal towards minorities.

⁴ Jim Acosta, “How Trump’s ‘Fake News’ Rhetoric has Gotten Out of Control,” *CNN*, June 11, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/06/11/politics/enemy-of-the-people-jim-acosta-donald-trump/index.html> (accessed July 5, 2019).

⁵ Anthony Scaramucci, “Grassroots America Shows the People Support Donald Trump,” *The Hill*, April 19, 2019, <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/439705-grassroots-america-shows-the-people-support-donald-trump> (accessed July 5, 2019).

⁶ See the statistics by YouGov, “Nigel Farage,” https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/explore/public_figure/Nigel_Farage (accessed July 5, 2019).

as “The People’s Army.”⁷ Like Trump, Farage employs nostalgia and anti-establishment tropes referring to out-of-touch politicians and an inefficient, corrupt and undemocratic European Union; he blames the EU for, in his words, “flooding” the UK with migrants,⁸ and, thus, maintains that leaving the EU will re-establish national sovereignty, restore Britishness (which seems to mean Englishness),⁹ and will halt what he terms “Islamification.”¹⁰

Through an exploration of the aforementioned campaigns, this chapter engages in a critical analysis of the rhetoric used by politicians and church leaders, and its effect on women. Moreover, by exposing the gendered impact of austerity and the misogyny of White Christianity, the chapter finds that theologians need to do more to challenge government policies that exacerbate poverty and to critique patriarchal theology that diminishes women’s voices and concerns. In keeping with liberation theology, the preferential option for the poor requires that church leaders mount a robust response to right-wing populism and the co-opting of evangelical Christianity for political gain. Moreover, an effective response necessitates self-reflection on and redressing of White male privilege, so as to eradicate sexism and racism.

Donald Trump and White Evangelicals¹¹

⁷ Simon Hattenstone, “‘We’re Reactivating the People’s Army’: Inside the Battle for a Hard Brexit,” *The Guardian*, January 12, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/12/were-reactivating-the-peoples-army-inside-the-battle-for-a-hard-brexit> (accessed July 5, 2019).

⁸ David Deacon and Dominic Wring, “The UK Independence Party, Populism and the British News Media: Competition, Collaboration or Containment?,” *European Journal of Communication* 31:2 (2016): 169-84.

⁹ Richard Hayton, “The UK Independence Party and the Politics of Englishness,” *Political Studies Review* 14:3 (2016): 400-10. Farage is critical of Welsh and Scottish nationalism and of devolution.

¹⁰ Andrew J. Mycock and Richard Hayton, “The Party Politics of Englishness,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 16:2 (2014): 251–72.

¹¹ ‘Evangelical’ is a contested term, but it refers broadly to conservative Christians who place great emphasis on the Bible and on proselytizing and conversion, as such, evangelicals are often seen as counter cultural.

Following the successful election campaign of Donald Trump to become President of the US, terms such as “fake news,”¹² “post-truth,”¹³ and “alternative facts”¹⁴ became commonplace. Analysis by the fact-checking site Politifact revealed that “144 of Trump’s 274 fact-checked statements [were] false” compared with only “33 of Clinton’s 263 fact-checked statements.”¹⁵ Trump’s lies were no secret, yet, in spite of the Christian emphasis on truthfulness to be found in biblical verses such as “and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32, NRSV) and the commandment not to lie: “you shall not bear false witness” (Exod. 20:16, NRSV), much of his electoral support came from and is still found amongst White evangelical communities.¹⁶ An unlikely association between evangelicals and Republicans can be traced back four decades to the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan. This union is somewhat surprising considering Reagan’s initially liberal stance on abortion and same-sex relations; nevertheless, he garnered evangelical support by declaring himself to be pro-life and a holder of traditional moral values.¹⁷ As Daniel Williams recalls: “In 1980, 67 percent of white evangelical voters supported Reagan, and when he ran for reelection in 1984, that figure increased to 76 percent.”¹⁸ Under the Reagan Administration, nearly 90,000 people died of

¹² Danielle Kurtzleben, “With ‘Fake News’ Trump Moves from Alternative Facts to Alternative Language,” *National Public Radio*, February 17, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2017/02/17/515630467/with-fake-news-trump-moves-from-alternative-facts-to-alternative-language> (accessed February 20, 2017).

¹³ Alison Flood, “‘Post-truth’ Named Word of the Year by Oxford Dictionaries,” *The Guardian*, November 15, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/15/post-truth-named-word-of-the-year-by-oxford-dictionaries> (accessed February 20, 2017).

¹⁴ Jon Swaine, “Donald Trump’s Team Defends ‘Alternative Facts’ After Widespread Protests,” *The Guardian*, January 23, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/22/donald-trump-kellyanne-conway-inauguration-alternative-facts> (accessed February 20, 2017).

¹⁵ Helen Lewis, “Post-Truth Politics,” *Nieman Reports*, November 18, 2016, <http://niemanreports.org/articles/post-truth-politics/> (accessed February 28, 2017); see <http://www.politifact.com> for the latest tallies.

¹⁶ Since his election, several books have been published claiming that Trump is God’s messenger, despite his flaws; see, for instance, Stephen E. Strang, *God and Donald Trump* (Lake Mary, FL: Frontline, 2017) and Mark Taylor, *The Trump Prophecies* (Crane, MO: Defender, 2017).

¹⁷ Prior to his presidential campaign, Reagan supported the liberalizing of abortion law and rejected attempts to prevent homosexuals teaching in schools, but during his campaign he spoke out against repealing anti-gay laws and referred to abortion as ending life (see Daniel K. Williams, “Reagan’s Religious Right: The Unlikely Alliance Between Southern Evangelicals and a California Conservative,” in *Ronald Reagan and the 1980s*, ed. Cheryl Hudson and Gareth Davies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 135-149, at 136.)

¹⁸ Williams, “Reagan’s Religious Right,” in *Ronald Reagan and the 1980s*, ed. Hudson and Davies, at 135.

AIDS while pleas for presidential action went unheeded, same-sex marriage remained illegal and the ‘gag-rule’ was introduced preventing healthcare professionals who receive federal funds from discussing abortion or referring pregnant women to abortion providers. Furthermore, Reagan’s racist stance cannot be ignored. He opposed the Civil Rights Act and openly supported South African apartheid, a regime which former Archbishop Desmond Tutu calls “evil and unchristian.”¹⁹ Tutu is unequivocal in his disdain for Reagan whom he describes as “the pits as far as blacks are concerned.”²⁰ Against this backdrop, perhaps it is not as surprising as it might otherwise seem that Trump’s openly misogynistic²¹ and racist remarks during his presidential campaign appeared not to decrease his evangelical support base; even women in White evangelical Christian communities continued to acknowledge their support for Trump and to make light of his sexist remarks.

Outside of evangelical Christianity, social media enabled a groundswell of counter-movements with women’s marches spreading across the world in protest against Trump’s inauguration. In outlook, the marches were candidly pro-choice, fearful that Trump’s promises to make abortion illegal would come to fruition, thereby curtailing women’s reproductive rights. Women and men from a diverse range of Christian denominations and other faith perspectives were amongst the marchers,²² except, that is, for evangelicals who stayed away on the grounds of their opposition to abortion rights.²³ It seems that, when ranked on the basis of

¹⁹ Tutu, cited in John Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace: The Authorised Biography of Desmond Tutu* (New York: The Free Press, 2006), 256.

²⁰ Tutu, cited in Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 260.

²¹ Kate Manne’s distinction between sexism and misogyny is instructive here: she argues that misogyny does not refer to the hatred of all women, but rather to the hatred and control of women who challenge male dominance; women (especially White women) who conform to patriarchal norms of submission and femininity, however, are rewarded by powerful White men. Sexism is the ideology that women are weaker, more nurturing and so on, because they are women. Misogyny reinforces sexism in defense of male privilege. See Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

²² Carol Kuruvilla and Antonia Blumberg, “Why these People of Faith are Marching for Women this Weekend,” *The Huffington Post*, January 23, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-these-people-of-faith-are-marching-for-women-this-weekend_us_58812f2de4b096b4a230b46c (accessed February 20, 2017).

²³ Rebecca Nelson, “The Women Who Won’t March: ‘Silenced’ Conservatives Vow to Stay Home,” *The Guardian*, January 19, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/19/womens-march-washington-conservative-tomi-lahren> (accessed February 20, 2017).

their significance to evangelicals and Republicans, the pro-life stance of the President is held to be of greater importance than respect for women; a stance that was further advanced by his promise to fill the vacant Supreme Court seat with a conservative justice. This is not to imply that evangelical women approve of Trump's misogyny or eschew all forms of equality; rather, even those advocating equal pay and wider access to healthcare, and appalled by Trump's treatment of women, may hold to pro-natalist views to the extent that, in Hannah Anderson's words, "abortion was likely THE issue to tip the scales for evangelical women to vote Trump."²⁴

Following the release of the video in which Trump was recorded bragging about "pussy grabbing", a handful of evangelical leaders were seen to distance themselves from the Trump campaign, but widespread condemnation from evangelicals was not forthcoming. On the contrary, Robert Jeffress, a Baptist minister performed a remarkable feat of cognitive dissonance, both acknowledging that Trump's behavior towards women is "lewd, offensive and indefensible" and continuing to advocate that his congregation vote for him; whereas, other Christian leaders, such as David Brody of the Christian Broadcasting Network, normalized and excused Trump's behavior by tweeting "We ALL sin every single day."²⁵ Catholic bishops and other religious leaders were willing to give voice to criticisms of Trump's policy banning refugees and migrants from seven, predominately Muslim, countries,²⁶ but remained largely silent on Trump's attitudes towards women.

²⁴ Kate Shellnutt, "Women's March Sets Out to Exclude 40 Percent of American Women," *Christianity Today*, January 18, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2017/january/womens-march-sets-out-to-exclude-40-percent-of-american-wom.html> (accessed February 20, 2017).

²⁵ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "'Still the Best Candidate': Some Evangelicals Still Back Trump Despite Lewd Video," *The Washington Post*, October 8, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/10/08/still-the-best-candidate-some-evangelicals-still-back-trump-despite-lewd-video/?utm_term=.fc911734cef8 (accessed February 20, 2017).

²⁶ CNS, "Trump's Action Banning Refugees Brings Outcry from US Church Leaders," *Catholic News Service*, January 30, 2017, <http://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2017/trumps-action-banning-refugees-brings-outcry-from-us-church-leaders.cfm> (accessed February 20, 2017).

Given the glow in which Trump appeared to bask, it is disappointing rather than astonishing that the prospect of a female president was not an overwhelming vote winner amongst women, despite Clinton's promotion of women's rights. Alec Tyson and Shiva Maniam note that: "Women supported Clinton over Trump by 54% to 42%. This is about the same as the Democratic advantage among women in 2012 (55% Obama vs. 44% Romney) and 2008 (56% Obama vs. 43% McCain)."²⁷ Thus, while more women did vote for Clinton than Trump, the gender gap in voting preferences between Republicans and Democrats was only slightly worse for Trump than in previous presidential campaigns, even though the possibility of a female president was expected to attract a greater share of the female vote, and even though he spoke of women with derision.

Hence, the relentless defamation of Clinton entwined with an acceptance of sexism amongst evangelicals proved to be a winning combination in securing Trump's victory in the presidential campaign. While Clinton undoubtedly made mistakes in her campaign, and carried a substantial measure of disrespect from feminist quarters for standing by Bill Clinton after the unequal power dynamics in his sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky became public, she was clearly held to a higher standard than Trump. Much of Clinton's campaign was overshadowed by an FBI investigation into whether or not the use of her private email server constituted a dangerous mishandling of classified information (an accusation for which she was eventually cleared). Trump, however, somehow shrugged off multiple accusations of sexual misconduct,²⁸ whilst referring to Mexican immigrants as rapists,²⁹ and yet his campaign confidence was unshaken. Even amongst evangelical supporters, Trump was a Teflon figure

²⁷ Alec Tyson and Shiva Maniam, "Behind Trump's Victory: Divisions by Race, Gender, Education," *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions-by-race-gender-education/> (accessed January 31, 2017).

²⁸ Alan Yuhas, "Woman Who Accused Donald Trump of Raping Her at 13 Drops Lawsuit," *The Guardian*, November 5, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/04/donald-trump-teenage-rape-accusations-lawsuit-dropped> (accessed February 28, 2017).

²⁹ Washington Post Staff, "Full Text: Donald Trump Announces a Presidential Bid," *The Washington Post*, June 16, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/?utm_term=.7f6152463750 (accessed February 28, 2017).

whose 'sins' simply slipped away; he occupied a gilded pedestal surrounded by those prepared to extend Christian forgiveness to any and all of his discriminatory remarks and baseless accusations but to none of Clinton's flaws. Moreover, for growing numbers of evangelicals, Trump's transgressions, rather than making him a less desirable president, actually function to confirm a belief, based on the notion that God works with imperfections, that he is God's chosen president of America.³⁰

In voting for Trump, large numbers of White evangelicals have demonstrated that Christian patriarchy and White privilege are alive and well. Moreover, while women should not be singularly blamed for absorbing the incessant messages of White male superiority, by acquiescing they become complicit in perpetuating sexism, and in this they are not blameless. Across Christian traditions, women are taught to be submissive (often based on Eph. 5:22-24)³¹ on the grounds that they have different (but allegedly equal) roles: this is a complementarity thesis that merely disguises inequality and keeps women out of positions of power within the church. Emphasis on male headship is such that the ordination of women remains a thorny issue for Catholics and conservative evangelicals (reliant on 1 Cor. 14:34).³² Furthermore, the gap in equality of opportunity is widened by the policing of women's reproductive choices by Catholics and conservative evangelicals who insist that a fertilized egg is a person with a right to life.³³

³⁰ Eugene Scott, "Comparing Trump to Jesus, and Why Some Evangelicals Believe Trump is God's Chosen One," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/11/25/why-evangelicals-like-rick-perry-believe-that-trump-is-gods-chosen-one/> (accessed September 19, 2020).

³¹ "Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands" (NRSV).

³² "[W]omen should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate" (NRSV).

³³ The CWA (Concerned Women for America) is a pro-life conservative evangelical group that claims to be anti-feminist and biblical. The CWA has praised Trump, stood by Kavanaugh, and opposes the equality act and LGBT rights.

Internalized misogyny appears to enable women, primarily White women, “to vote against their own self-interest.”³⁴ Suzanne Moore contends that “every woman who dismissed Trump’s treatment of women as just ‘the way men are’ has also defended a man in her own life who has done the same thing.”³⁵ Thus, by supporting a populist President who waves away his boasts of sexually assaulting women (by labelling it “locker room talk”), women who report male violence are likely to encounter disbelief and victim-blaming. Yet, considered from a different angle, maintaining the status quo may be in (some) women’s self-interest: White women who perform womanhood by assisting White men in their achievements, colluding in the denial of sexism, receive rewards as a result of lending their support.³⁶

In their effort to avoid being seen as difficult women and to appease White male leaders, White evangelical women have effectively restricted access to contraception and opposed positive discrimination for women;³⁷ they have aligned themselves with Christian denominations that have few female-led church congregations,³⁸ or with evangelical organizations where the status of high profile wives is dependent upon the even higher profile of their preacher husbands: they exist as their husband’s helpmeet and in submission to him.³⁹ Evangelical White women have performed White femininity to retain stability and favor in their own lives, but, in so doing, opting for White male praise over female solidarity.⁴⁰

There are dissenting voices from within the church prepared to call out the hypocrisy of Christian complicity in racist and misogynist populist political rhetoric. Franciscan Friar,

³⁴ Suzanne Moore, “Why Did Women Vote for Trump? Because Misogyny is Not a Male-Only Attribute,” *The Guardian*, November 16, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/commentisfree/2016/nov/16/why-did-women-vote-for-trump-because-misogyny-is-not-a-male-only-attribute> (accessed 28 February 2017).

³⁵ Moore, “Why Did Women Vote for Trump?”

³⁶ For more on the right kind of women, see the chapter by Ludger Viefhues-Bailey, “Querying Populism by Queering Chantal Mouffe: Understanding Hetero-Patriarchal Populism” in this volume.

³⁷ Pew Research Center, “Women and Leadership,” 14 January 2015, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/01/14/women-and-leadership/> (accessed March 1, 2017).

³⁸ David Masci, “The Divide Over Ordaining Women,” *Pew Research Center*, September 9, 2014 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/09/the-divide-over-ordaining-women/> (accessed March 1, 2017).

³⁹ See Kate Bowler, *The Preacher’s Wife* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁴⁰ In so doing, they abandon African-American women. See Ruby Hamad, *White Tears Brown Scars* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Publishing, 2019).

Richard Rohr, states: “The evangelical support of Trump will be an indictment against its validity as a Christian movement for generations to come,”⁴¹ while Episcopalian Reverend Gay Clark Jennings recalls: “For months, as the Republican nominee for president spewed hatred and contempt for women, people of color, and immigrants, the white church stood by and watched. The Twitter hashtag #whitechurchquiet bears witness to our silence.”⁴² Nevertheless, the propensity of White evangelicals, including women, to continue to treat with impunity Republicans accused of sexual misconduct with young girls was evidenced in 2017, when Roy Moore’s bid for the U.S. Senate in Alabama attracted a high percentage of their vote. In the end, Moore lost to Democrat Doug Jones by a very small margin (1.63 percent); this was far from a wholesale rejection by Christians, rather, as Yonat Shimron reports, “80 percent of white born-again Christians voted for Moore – nearly identical to the 81 percent of evangelicals nationally who voted for Trump in 2016.”⁴³

In the same year as Moore’s failed bid for Senate, female actors were breaking their silence on sexual abuse in the film industry; in particular, accusations against Harvey Weinstein were stacking up at a rapid pace. Publicly witnessing apparently wealthy, powerful, successful women reporting discrimination and abuse in the workplace opened up a space for women around the world to draw attention to the extent of the problem using the hashtag #MeToo (borrowed from an earlier campaign for sexual assault survivors, begun by African-American Tarana Burke in 2007). Sexual assault is not external to churches, however. Inspired by the Me Too Movement, Hannah Paasch and Emily Joy started the hashtag #ChurchToo for girls and

⁴¹ @RichardRohrOFM, 4:10 PM – October 10, 2016, cited by Antonia Blumberg, “16 Tweets that Capture Why Some Christians Feel Betrayed After the Election,” *Huffington Post*, November 10, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/16-tweets-that-capture-why-some-christians-feel-betrayed-after-the-election_us_5823b45ce4b0d9ce6fc0c350 (accessed April 3, 2017).

⁴² Gay Clark Jennings, “Why Reconciliation with President-Elect Trump May Be Impossible for Some Christians,” *Religion News Service*, November 15, 2016, <http://religionnews.com/2016/11/15/why-reconciliation-with-president-elect-trump-may-be-impossible-for-some-christians/> (accessed April 3, 2017).

⁴³ Yonat Shimron, “Alabama Fallout: Does Character Count?,” *The Gazette*, December 13, 2017, <http://gazette.com/alabama-fallout-does-character-count/article/1617174> (accessed December 19, 2017).

women to share their stories of abuse by clergy and fellow Christians.⁴⁴ It was not only the rapidity with which the hashtag gathered pace that revealed the pervasiveness of the problem, the accounts therein highlighted the abject failure of Christian communities to acknowledge and support survivors. This failure is bound up with a number of theological motifs, including (as I have discussed elsewhere)⁴⁵ the maleness of God-language, complementarianism and female submission and forgiveness; which, when coupled with an institutional leaning towards protecting the reputations of powerful men, instructs young girls abused by male leaders to repent of their own sexuality, to remain silent, to pray for and apologize to their abusers. Abuse by men has been whitewashed: perpetrators have been applauded and absolved for confessing, whilst continuing to hold positions of power over young girls and women. Commenting on the ongoing Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales (IICSA) and the hearings specifically relating to Christian organizations, Linda Woodhead concurs with the #ChurchToo accounts noting that “a faulty doctrine of forgiveness was used by abusers to salve their consciences, by church officials to move on without dealing with the problem, and by parishioners and clergy to marginalize ‘unchristian’ victims and whistleblowers.”⁴⁶

Brexit and White Christianity

Even before the result of the campaign for Britain to end its membership of the European Union (EU) was cemented in the decision to hold a referendum on the issue, the rising tide of populist

⁴⁴ Casey Quackenbush, “The Religious Community is Speaking Out Against Sexual Violence with #ChurchToo,” *Time*, November 22, 2017, <http://time.com/5034546/me-too-church-too-sexual-abuse/> (accessed April 8, 2018) and Hannah Paasch, “Sexual Abuse Happens In #ChurchToo – We’re Living Proof,” *Huffington Post*, December 4, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/sexual-abuse-churchtoo_us_5a205b30e4b03350e0b53131 (accessed April 8, 2018). Similar hashtags now exist for other religious groups, such as #MosqueMeToo for Muslims, and #GamAni for Jews.

⁴⁵ See, for example, “The Concept of Sacrifice: A Reconsideration of the Feminist Critique,” *International Journal of Public Theology*, 1:2 (2007), 210-229; and “The Possibility of a Gender-Transcendent God: Taking Macmurray Forward,” *Feminist Theology*, 15:2 (2007), 236-255.

⁴⁶ Linda Woodhead, “Forget Culture. It’s a New Theology We Need,” *Church Times*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/6-april/comment/opinion/iicsa-forget-culture-new-theology-we-need> (accessed April 8, 2018).

narrative was in abundance in the right-wing press. News headlines and right-wing politicians equated austerity with immigration in an attempt to turn the British public against the freedom of movement enjoyed by EU citizens.⁴⁷ In addition, in a populist bid to mobilize the animosity of the ‘common’ people against the EU, the ‘Vote Leave’ campaign portrayed the European Council (which directs the EU) as a band of unelected elites who siphon funds from the UK that would otherwise be spent on the National Health Service (NHS).⁴⁸ Farage, at the time leader of the UK Independence Party, claimed that queues on the motorway and waiting times for doctor’s appointments were due to immigration,⁴⁹ while Boris Johnson (now Prime Minister of the UK) toured the country in a red bus emblazoned with the words: “We send the EU £350 million a week, let’s fund our NHS instead”; the figure was grossly misleading and it was unlikely that leaving the EU would result in a massive spend on the National Health Service.⁵⁰ On the contrary, the Conservative government’s austerity measures drastically cut spending on public services, while the anti-EU rhetoric of the campaign exacerbated shortages in the NHS as thousands of European medics decided to leave the UK unsure of their right to work and fearful of increasing racist and xenophobic attacks in Britain.⁵¹ Counter claims by the ‘Vote Remain’ campaign were, ultimately, unsuccessful; the vote to leave won by a narrow margin of 52 to 48, effectively cleaving the country into two, the antagonism between ‘leavers’ and ‘remainers’ leading to rifts amongst families, friends and colleagues. The then-Prime Minister

⁴⁷ Stuart Gietel-Basten, “Why Brexit? The Toxic Mix of Immigration and Austerity,” *Population and Development Review*, 42:4 (2016): 673-680.

⁴⁸ Greenberg Center for Goeconomic Studies, “What Brexit Reveals About Rising Populism,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 29, 2016, <https://www.cfr.org/interview/what-brexit-reveals-about-rising-populism> (accessed April 24, 2018).

⁴⁹ Kevin Rawlinson, “Farage Blames Immigration for Traffic on M4 After No-Show at UKIP Reception,” *The Guardian*, December 7, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/dec/07/nigel-farage-blames-immigration-m4-traffic-ukip-reception> (accessed September 20, 2020).

⁵⁰ Anoosh Chakelian, “Boris Johnson Resurrects the Leave Campaign’s £350m for NHS Fantasy,” *New Statesman*, September 16, 2017, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/09/boris-johnson-resurrects-leave-campaign-s-350m-nhs-fantasy> (accessed September 20, 2020).

⁵¹ Daniel Boffey, “Record Numbers of EU Nurses Quit NHS,” *The Guardian*, March 18, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/mar/18/nhs-eu-nurses-quit-record-numbers> (accessed September 20, 2020).

David Cameron abruptly resigned. Shortly after Cameron's resignation, Boris Johnson, "the de facto leader of the Brexit campaign," removed himself from the leadership contest; a decision described in the Press as "a spineless dereliction of duty and act of betrayal."⁵² A divided country began to realize that the government lacked a concrete plan for the next steps following the referendum.

Nearly sixty per cent of Christians voted leave, according to polling by Lord Ashcroft,⁵³ despite the fact that the leave campaign employed divisive and dishonest tactics that stand in sharp contrast to the Christian motif of extending hospitality to and welcoming the stranger (see, for example, Deut. 10:19; Lev. 19:34, Mtt. 25:35-40; Heb. 13:1-3). In part this higher turnout for leave amongst Christians than amongst the general population has a demographic explanation: British Christians are more likely to be White and elderly when compared with the general population; in addition to which, amongst Anglicans there is a preference for right-wing political parties.⁵⁴ Further explanation, largely unexplored by commentators and academics, may rest with the male hierarchy of mainstream and fringe Christian communities.

Prominent figures in the Anglican church, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the bishops of Durham and Guilford, amongst others, openly supported the remain campaign, along with Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.⁵⁵ However, their input on the debate was far from robust or persuasive; it consisted mostly of hand-wringing at the prospect of

⁵² The Newsroom, "YP Comment: A Spineless Dereliction of Duty and Act of Betrayal – Why Boris Turned His Back on No. 10," *The Yorkshire Post*, June 30, 2016, <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/politics/yp-comment-spineless-dereliction-duty-and-act-betrayal-why-boris-turned-his-back-no10-1795876> (accessed September 20, 2020).

⁵³ Harry Farley, "Christians and Brexit: Did God Command the UK to Leave the EU?," *Christian Today*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.and.brexit.did.god.command.the.uk.to.leave.the.eu/89427.htm> (accessed April 24, 2018).

⁵⁴ Siobhan McAndrew, "How Members of Different Faith Communities Feel About UK Political Parties," *London School of Economics*, May 25, 2017, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/religion-and-party-liking/> (accessed September 20, 2020).

⁵⁵ For further discussion of the theological underpinnings of Brexiteers, see the chapter by Lukas Meyer, "The God of the Brexiteers" in this volume.

departing from the EU, which left a vacuum ready to be filled by populist leave messages.⁵⁶ Shocked by the unexpected outcome of the vote, they expressed dismay and called for “unity” in what amounted to a rather opaque and mealy-mouthed assessment of the situation.⁵⁷ Notably absent from the majority of political and theological discourse during the Brexit campaign was any sustained analysis of the gendered implications of the vote, even though “86% of the burden of austerity since 2010 has fallen on women.”⁵⁸ Austerity measures have a disproportionate effect on women, because women “are more likely to work in the public sector and to need public services.”⁵⁹ Moreover, an independent report published by the Fawcett Society warns that a post-Brexit fall in economic growth will have negative consequences for already disadvantaged women. Cuts to public sector jobs, welfare benefits, affordable housing, reproductive healthcare, and refuges for survivors of domestic violence, reduce women’s financial independence and increase women’s vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. For these reasons, a striking headline in *The Guardian* read “Brexit is a feminist issue,” and, yet, as Helen Lewis highlights in the article, the debate between leavers and remainers was dominated by White male elites who appear to be ignorant of, or largely unconcerned by, financial and gender-based problems from which their privileged position in society shields them.⁶⁰ It was something of a joke to point out that, when the Brexit negotiating teams sat down together, the entirely White British team had “more beards than women” (and there were only a few

⁵⁶ Press Association, “Archbishop of Canterbury Supports Remain Campaign in EU Referendum,” *The Guardian*, June 12, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/12/archbishop-of-canterbury-supports-remain-campaign-in-eu-referendum> (accessed August 31, 2019).

⁵⁷ Harry Farley, “Unity vs Defiance: Church Leaders Respond to Brexit,” *Christian Today*, June 24, 2016, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/unity-vs.defiance.church.leaders.respond.to.brexit/89186.htm> (accessed April 24, 2018).

⁵⁸ Heather Stewart, “Women Bearing 86% of Austerity Burden, Commons Figures Reveal,” *The Guardian*, March 9, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/09/women-bearing-86-of-austerity-burden-labour-research-reveals> (accessed April 24, 2018).

⁵⁹ Kathryn Snowdon, “Hard Brexit Will ‘Adversely Impact Women,’ Groundbreaking Report Finds,” *Huffington Post*, March 27, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/brexit-impact-women-fawcett-society_uk_5ab8f513e4b054d118e4fe60 (accessed August 31, 2019).

⁶⁰ Helen Lewis, “Brexit is a Feminist Issue,” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/mar/20/women-europe-referendum-debate-brexit> (accessed April 24, 2018).

beards).⁶¹ Deeper analysis by the *Huffington Post* found that, whilst female MPs accounted for nearly thirty per cent of the seats in the House of Commons, men's voices dominated ninety per cent of the Brexit debate in Parliament.⁶² Women, as a proportion of the population, are significantly underrepresented in UK politics;⁶³ even where women are represented, they face barriers of sexism and inequality in the workplace. Moreover, since protection from workplace discrimination presently relies on EU laws, there is no guarantee that the situation will improve after the UK leaves the European Union.

A greater number of women in Parliament would increase the likelihood that issues negatively affecting women's lives, and policies that exacerbate them, would be challenged. Nevertheless, it would be naïve to assume that female politicians would necessarily improve the lives of women: both of the female Prime Ministers in the UK's parliamentary history, Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May, have fallen short in this regard. Thatcher filled her cabinet with men, reduced spending on welfare, and ignored pleas for childcare provision.⁶⁴ May presided over cuts to services and benefits that have made women's lives more precarious (despite her claims to the contrary).⁶⁵ Reassuringly, Church of England bishops, alongside Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, and other religious organizations have challenged the government on the so-called 'rape clause': a clause that restricts benefit claims to two children unless the

⁶¹ Siona Jenkins, "Is Brexit Bad for Women?," *Financial Times*, July 7, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/a1ec120c-6307-11e7-91a7-502f7ee26895> (accessed April 24, 2018). Diversity on the EU side is only slightly better.

⁶² Rachel Wearmouth, "Exclusive: Men Spoke for 90% of the Debate on Brexit in Parliament – New Study," *Huffington Post*, October 11, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/male-mps-made-almost-90-of-speeches-on-brexit-in-westminster_uk_5bbdbf98e4b01470d0571081 (accessed August 31, 2019).

⁶³ The Women and Equalities Committee, *Women in the House of Commons After the 2020 Election: Fifth Report of 2016-17* (London: House of Commons, 2017), available at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/630/630.pdf>

⁶⁴ Linda McDowell, "Women in Thatcher's Britain," in *The Political Geography of Contemporary Britain*, ed. John Mohan (London: Palgrave, 1989), 172-186.

⁶⁵ Maya Oppenheim, "Teresa May Rolled Back Women's Rights Say Campaigners," *Independent*, May 24, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/theresa-may-resign-womens-rights-austerity-benefits-conservative-leader-a8929141.html> (accessed September 20, 2020); see also The Week, "Fact Check: The Truth About British Funding for Women's Refugees," *The Week*, December 12, 2017, <https://www.theweek.co.uk/90364/fact-check-the-truth-about-british-funding-for-women-s-refuges> (accessed September 20, 2020).

claimant can prove that further children were conceived through rape. Whilst the challenge highlights the likely increase in both poverty and abortion that will result from the clause, it is concerning that religious disquiet appears to stem from a pronatalist drive to have large families rather than a deep critique of a government punishing women.⁶⁶

In addition to defending the third child ‘rape clause,’ May contributed to the anti-immigration rhetoric of future populist campaigns with the controversial “go home” vans and the promotion of a ‘hostile environment’ for immigrants, deliberately inculcated in the UK.⁶⁷ Admittedly, the phrase ‘hostile environment’ was introduced in 2010 by Labour’s Home Secretary Alan Johnson before being developed by Theresa May whose stated aim, as Home Secretary in 2012, was to generate “a really hostile reception”.⁶⁸ Several legislative changes then followed, granting the Home Office additional powers to deport rough sleepers from European Economic Area (EEA) countries, to demand immigration data from the NHS and educational facilities, to restrict access to work and to appeals, and to deport unaccompanied minors once they reached eighteen years of age (regardless of how many years they had lived in the UK, and regardless of whether or not they had any persistent connections with their country of origin). It was only when what is now referred to as the “Windrush scandal” made mainstream news headlines in 2017, owing to the bravery of Paulette Wilson, that the true extent of the hostile environment became apparent to the wider public.⁶⁹ Commonwealth

⁶⁶ Harriet Sherwood, “Scrap Two-Child Limit on Benefits, Say UK’s Religious Leaders,” *The Guardian*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/apr/06/scrap-two-child-limit-benefits-uk-religious-leaders-welfare> (accessed September 20, 2020). For a discussion of this pronatalist drive in the US context, see the chapter by Ludger Viefhues-Bailey, “Querying Populism by Queering Chantal Mouffe: Understanding Hetero-Patriarchal Populism” in this volume.

⁶⁷ Matthew Taylor, “‘Go Home’ Campaign Creating Climate of Fear, Say Rights Groups,” *The Guardian*, August 8, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/aug/08/go-home-climate-of-fear-rights-groups> (accessed September 30, 2020).

⁶⁸ James Kirkup and Robert Winnett, “Theresa May Interview: ‘We’re Going to Give Illegal Migrants a Really Hostile Reception,’” *The Telegraph*, May 25, 2012, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/theresa-may-interview-going-give-illegal-migrants-really-hostile/> (accessed September 30, 2020).

⁶⁹ ‘Windrush’ refers to the HMT Empire Windrush ship which brought Caribbean migrants to the UK in 1948. Since the Caribbean was part of the British Commonwealth, the migrants were automatically British subjects with a right to live and work in the UK. See also Amelia Gentleman, “Without Paulette Wilson, Windrush Might Have Remained Hidden,” *The Guardian*, July 24, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk->

citizens of Caribbean heritage suddenly found themselves deprived of healthcare and employment, evicted for rent arrears, detained and deported. Despite having a right to British citizenship and having lived and worked in the UK for decades, Black Britons referred to as the Windrush generation were required to provide documentary evidence that their residency predated 1973 in order to avoid being classed as ‘undocumented migrants,’ even though many had arrived as children and the Home Office had destroyed their landing cards.

As Maya Goodfellow reveals, anti-immigration policy is deeply rooted in Britain’s colonial past. Moreover, it continues to feed populist rhetoric leading to racist and dehumanizing behavior.⁷⁰ Church leaders have been rightly outspoken in their condemnation of the Windrush scandal. For example, Bishop Christopher of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark spoke of his horror at learning that members of his congregation were facing the “grave injustice” of deportation;⁷¹ Wale Hudson Roberts, Justice Coordinator to the Baptist Union, stated that “The Government’s behaviour ha[d] been reprehensible”;⁷² Catholic Bishop Paul McAleenan insisted that:

The Government must now restore the human dignity of those whose rights were violated. They must ensure that necessary emergency support is provided and compensation made. Most of all they must take steps to ensure that such mistakes which undermine one’s God given value are never repeated.⁷³

Such outwardly directed critique, however, is of limited value if churches do not examine their own participation in and perpetuation of racism on both a practical and theological level. In particular, the Church of England has been called to account for its “horrible and humiliating

[news/2020/jul/24/without-palette-wilson-windrush-may-have-remained-hidden](https://www.bbc.com/news/2020/jul/24/without-palette-wilson-windrush-may-have-remained-hidden) (accessed September 26, 2020).

⁷⁰ Maya Goodfellow, *Hostile Environment: How Immigrants Became Scapegoats* (London: Verso Books, 2019).

⁷¹ The Editor, “Bishops Speak Out for the ‘Windrush’ Children,” *The Bridge: Newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark*, 23:4, May 4, 2018, 1-12, at 1, available at <https://southwark.anglican.org/downloads/The%20Bridge/bridgemay2018.pdf>

⁷² The Baptist Times, “Baptist Anger Over Windrush Crisis,” *Baptist Times*, April 19, 2018, https://baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/520133/Baptist_anger_over.aspx (accessed September 26, 2020).

⁷³ The Catholic Church: Bishops Conference of England and Wales, “‘Windrush Scandal Must Not Be Repeated,’ says Bishop,” *CBCEW*, June 21, 2019, <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/windrush-scandal-must-not-be-repeated-says-catholic-bishop/> (accessed September 26, 2020).

racism.”⁷⁴ On arrival in the UK, the Windrush generation did not find a warm welcome in all churches. Furthermore, more than fifty years since their arrival, there are hardly any Black bishops in the Church of England. Institutional racism in the Anglican Church is ever present; it has not been confined to history as both Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the first female Black bishop in the Church of England, and Azariah France-Williams, amongst others, attest.⁷⁵ In fact, Hudson-Wilkin’s experience of the Church is of intersectional oppression: she has been subjected to both racism and sexism.⁷⁶ At its root, Anglicanism is entwined with White privilege, which gave succor to a notion of Englishness as White Christianity in the Brexit debate.⁷⁷

Most notably, Farage’s notorious 2016 ‘Breaking Point’ poster depicted a long, winding queue of Syrian refugees crossing the Croatia-Slovenia border in 2015, captioned with the words “The EU has failed us all. We must break free of the EU and take back our borders.” The poster was widely condemned for misrepresenting the plight of those fleeing war, conflating the UK’s legal duty (under the Refugee Convention) to accept refugees with the free movement of European workers. Bonnie Greer implied that Farage was “deploying Nazi-style propaganda.”⁷⁸ Farage’s poster built upon language used by the Prime Minister, David Cameron, the previous year; Cameron had referred to those risking their lives crossing the

⁷⁴ Harriet Sherwood, “Church of England Urged to Apologise for Windrush Racism,” *The Guardian*, January 24, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/24/church-of-england-urged-to-apologise-for-windrush-racism> (accessed September 26, 2020).

⁷⁵ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England* (London: SCM Press, 2020).

⁷⁶ Jonathan Owen and Emily Dugan, “Even Outstanding Women Struggle to Rise in the CofE,” *Independent*, February 26, 2012 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/even-outstanding-women-struggle-rise-cofe-7440944.html> (accessed September 26, 2020).

⁷⁷ See Anthony G. Reddie, *Theologising Brexit: A Liberationist and Postcolonial Critique* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 17-25.

⁷⁸ Oliver Wright, “Nigel Farage Accused of Deploying Nazi-Style Propaganda as Remain Crash Poster Unveiling with Rival Vans,” *Independent*, June 16, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nigel-farage-brexit-poster-vans-eu-referendum-london-remain-breaking-point-a7085396.html> (accessed September 26, 2020).

Mediterranean Sea as a “swarm” of migrants.⁷⁹ Yet, despite this reprehensible terminology, Christian leaders on the leave-side contributed to the anti-immigration rhetoric.

For instance, former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey, equated pressures on resources, such as schools and the NHS, with “an unasked-for experiment in uncontrolled immigration,” and he, like Farage and others in the leave campaign, connected the threat of terrorism in Europe with the freedom of movement in the EU.⁸⁰ Fringe evangelical leaders painted a picture of the European Union as unchristian and gave the impression that a vote to leave would result in a revival of Christianity in Britain. For example, Peter Horrobin, founder of Ellel Ministries in Lancashire, which has spread across the globe to twenty countries (including South Africa, India, Colombia, Singapore and Rwanda), referred to the UK’s membership of the EU as “an ungodly alliance,” claiming that “it was not what God wanted for this Christian nation.”⁸¹ Horrobin’s blog links the survival of soldiers at Dunkirk with the image of a British nation at prayer, and he laments the acceptance of the differing religious beliefs of migrants. He suggested that the referendum was “an opportunity for the whole nation to repent,” insisting that it would be outside of the EU only that a British government could “bring the UK more in line with God’s laws”.⁸²

Horrobin’s opinion could be dismissed as an outlier railing against advances in multi-faith understanding, human rights, and sexual freedom, but views such as his gained traction in evangelical circles. At least one news article included a picture of an average redbrick house in the UK on the side of which, underneath a small Union Jack, huge painted letters read: “VOTE LEAVE E.U. REV. 18:4”; a blatant attempt to convince Christian voters of a biblical

⁷⁹ BBC News, “David Cameron ‘Swarm’ of Migrants Crossing the Mediterranean,” *BBC*, July 30, 2015, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-33714282> (accessed September 26, 2020).

⁸⁰ Ruth Gledhill, “Former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey Comes Out in Support of Brexit,” *Christian Today*, May 16, 2016 <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/former-archbishop-of-canterbury-lord-carey-comes-out-in-support-of-brex/86190.htm> (accessed August 31, 2019).

⁸¹ See Peter Horrobin’s blog post, “In or Out?,” *Ellel Ministries*, March 24, 2016, <http://blog.ellel.org/2016/03/24/in-or-out/> (accessed August 31, 2019).

⁸² Horrobin, “In or Out?,” *Ellel Ministries*, March 24, 2016.

mandate for Brexit. Revelation 18:4 states: “Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her plagues’” (NRSV).⁸³ Similarly, Joseph Munguti who founded the Christian Truth Center in Louisville, US, in 2012, draws on the fourth beast described in the Book of Daniel to claim that the beast’s ten horns are the ten nations of the EU, and, further, that: “Brexit – the exit of Britain from EU is a clear sign that Antichrist is rising up in the EU. It is him who has plucked up Britain from the EU fulfilling Bible end time prophecy.”⁸⁴ Since the referendum, these efforts to connect the European Union with sin, via comparison with Babylon and the nearing of the apocalypse as described in the Book of Revelation, have not disappeared. The United Church of God, founded in 1995 in Indianapolis, US, and claiming to have hundreds of congregations across the globe, states, in its magazine *Beyond Today*:

The EU is currently an unwieldy superstate with individual nations seeking their own benefits before that of the whole group. Closer union could lead to a shared army, currency, banks and government – the same kind of cultural, social and financial unity represented by the Tower of Babel. Scripture does not reveal the detail of how the current configuration in Europe might morph into the end-time prophesied powerhouse of ten nations under one ruler controlling much of the world’s economy. It is clear it will appear just a few years prior to the return of Jesus Christ and at a time of great economic and social upheaval.⁸⁵

Such views extended beyond the fringe finding support amongst familiar public figures in America. Franklin Graham, President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, whose festivals are attended by millions, referred to the outcome of the vote as a “glorious

⁸³ For the image of the house, captured by Frank Witte and shared on Facebook, see Farley, “Christians and Brexit,” *Christian Today*, June 28, 2016.

⁸⁴ Joseph Munguti, “Brexit and Bible Prophecy: The Rise of the Antichrist,” *Christian Truth Center*, no date but web archiving suggests this was first posted in July 2016, <https://www.christiantruthcenter.com/brexit-and-bible-prophecy/> (accessed September 27, 2020).

⁸⁵ David Fenney, “Babylon, Brexit and Why the Euro Zone Seeks Closer Union,” *Beyond Today: British and European Supplement*, March-April 2019, available at <http://ucg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Supplement-MarApr-2019.pdf>.

opportunity,” borrowing the phrase from Boris Johnson;⁸⁶ this is the same Franklin Graham who is widely criticized for his homophobic and Islamophobic remarks.

Likewise, Jerry A. Johnson denounced the ungodliness of the EU constitution and suggested that the vote to leave represented an opportunity for “a spiritual awakening” in the UK.⁸⁷ He blamed the EU for forcing the UK to “admit large numbers of migrants” and “massive numbers of Muslims” across its borders.⁸⁸ Johnson is the President of the longstanding evangelical association of Christian communications, the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB). The NRB lays claim to reaching “millions of viewers, listeners and readers worldwide”; its mission is “to advance biblical truth,” and fight against what it perceives to be the “emerging threats to the rights and freedoms of Christian broadcasters.”⁸⁹ Christian freedom of speech, according to Johnson, is being curtailed by homosexuality and Islam; he is referring to the fact that broadcasters can be penalized for homophobic or Islamophobic comments.⁹⁰

Thus, leave campaigners and supporters have irresponsibly stoked up anti-immigration and Islamophobic sentiments, blaming migrants for the underfunding of essential services, encouraging “natives” to turn against “foreigners,” and harping back to a mythical time of prosperity and sovereignty when Britain supposedly had a monolithic culture and a single religion. The unwanted others in this scenario are the minorities who look or sound different from the majority, and who practice a religion other than Christianity. Hence, given the

⁸⁶ Mark Woods, “US Evangelicals Hail British Vote to Leave EU,” *Christian Today*, June 27, 2016, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/us-evangelicals-hail-british-vote-to-leave-eu/89323.htm> (accessed August 31, 2019); cf. “Boris Johnson: We Have a Glorious Opportunity,” *Sky News*, June 24, 2016, <https://news.sky.com/story/boris-johnson-we-have-a-glorious-opportunity-10323641> (accessed November 10, 2020).

⁸⁷ Woods, “US Evangelicals Hail British Vote to Leave EU,” *Christian Today*, June 27, 2016.

⁸⁸ Woods, “US Evangelicals Hail British Vote to Leave EU,” *Christian Today*, June 27, 2016.

⁸⁹ See http://nrb.org/about/our_mission/ (accessed July 5, 2019).

⁹⁰ Jennie Law, “Christians’ Freedom is Being Challenged by Homosexuality and Islam, says NRB Head,” *The Christian Post*, February 28, 2017, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/christians-freedom-is-being-challenged-by-homosexuality-and-islam-says-nrb-head-176199/> (accessed August 31, 2019).

visibility of some women's Islamic dress – the hijab, the niqab or the burqa – Muslim women have become the primary targets of a notable rise in racial and religious hate crimes.⁹¹

Except for the Reverend George Pitcher, who, prior to the final ballot, called the Church of England “morally indolent and cowardly” for not making “a Christian case ... against Johnson” – “a serial liar, philanderer and shirker”⁹² – thus far the leading voices in the Church of England⁹³ (and the Church of Scotland⁹⁴) have been silent on the impact on women of having Johnson as the UK's Prime Minister. Prior to serving as Prime Minister, Johnson acted with ineptitude as Foreign Secretary damaging the plight of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe;⁹⁵ in addition, he made insulting and derogatory remarks referring to women wearing face veils “looking like letter boxes,”⁹⁶ which contributed to the normalizing of abuse and a rise in attacks against Muslim women.⁹⁷ Furthermore, he implied that veiled women resemble bank robbers; thus,

⁹¹ See May Bulman, “Brexit Vote Sees Highest Spike in Religious Racial and Hate Crimes Ever Recorded,” *The Independent*, July 7, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/racist-hate-crimes-surge-to-record-high-after-brexit-vote-new-figures-reveal-a7829551.html> (accessed September 30, 2019) for police statistics revealed following FOI requests; see also Sarah Marsh, “Record Number of Anti-Muslim Attacks Reported in UK Last Year,” *The Guardian*, July 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/20/record-number-anti-muslim-attacks-reported-uk-2017> (accessed September 30, 2019) for impact on Muslim women recorded by Tell MAMA UK.

⁹² George Pitcher, “It's Time for Christians to Speak Out Against Boris Johnson,” *The Guardian*, June 18, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jun/18/church-of-england-boris-johnson> (accessed August 31, 2019).

⁹³ See, for example, Tim Wyatt and Ed Thornton, “Church Leaders Warn Johnson About Consequences of No Deal,” *Church Times*, July 25, 2019, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/26-july/news/uk/church-leaders-warn-johnson-about-consequences-of-no-deal> (accessed September 30, 2019) and The Church of England, ‘Bishops Issue Open Letter on Brexit’, July 28, 2019 <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/bishops-issue-open-letter-brexit> (accessed September 30, 2019).

⁹⁴ See, for example, The Church of Scotland, “Statement on the Prorogation of the UK Parliament,” August 28, 2019, https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/2019/statement_on_the_prorogation_of_the_uk_parliamnt (30 September 2019).

⁹⁵ See John Johnston, “Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's Husband Says Boris Johnson Gaffe Boosted Iran ‘Propaganda,’” *Politics Home*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/conservative-party/news/104691/nazanin-zaghari-ratcliffes-husband-says> (accessed July 5, 2019).

⁹⁶ See BBC Politics, “Johnson Faces Criticism Over Burka ‘Letter Box’ Jibe,” August 6, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-45083275> (accessed July 5, 2019).

⁹⁷ Tell MAMA reports a spike in anti-Muslim crime, especially against veiled women, following Johnson's comments; see Nazia Parveen, “Boris Johnson's Burqa Comments ‘Led to Surge in Anti-Muslim Attacks,’” *The Guardian*, September 2, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/sep/02/boris-johnsons-burqa-comments-led-to-surge-in-anti-muslim-attacks> (accessed September 30, 2019).

feeding the right-wing narrative that Islam, and Muslim women in particular, are a threat.⁹⁸ Britain does not have the same prominence of evangelical Christian women supporting populism as can be seen in the US, but British women are still suffering under Christianity's patriarchal legacy. When evangelical leaders criticize the secularity of the EU and speak of Britain as a "Christian-nation," they leave Muslim women exposed to nationalistic rage. When church leaders ignore the gendered impact of any Brexit plan, they hide behind their male privilege and fail vulnerable women.

Liberation Theology, COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter

We are at a critical juncture in our history: 2020 is both the year of a global pandemic and a renewed focus on racism via the Black Lives Matter movement; a movement started in 2013 by three women: Opal Tometi, Patrisse Cullors, and Alicia Garza. The Black Lives Matter movement is itself a form of populism;⁹⁹ in fact - driven by grassroots action that challenges institutional racism – we could refer to this a truer form of populism than that with which it clashes, namely, the right-wing political 'populism' Donald Trump.¹⁰⁰ Not only has the death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, to name but two, fueled demands for a re-examination of police brutality against African-Americans; the higher death rate from COVID-19 amongst Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in the UK has highlighted the fact that socio-economic deprivation and unequal access to healthcare still runs on racial lines. Furthermore, despite deaths from COVID-19 being higher amongst men than women, the gendered impacts of lockdown once again demonstrate the persistence of patriarchy. During lockdown in the UK

⁹⁸ Press Association, "Boris Johnson Cleared over Burqa Comments", *The Guardian*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/dec/20/boris-johnson-cleared-over-burqa-comments> (accessed November 10, 2020).

⁹⁹ See Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From# BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2016), 77-107. See also the chapter by Vincent Lloyd, "Anger: A Secularized Theological Concept" in this volume.

¹⁰⁰ See Thomas Frank, *The People, No: A brief History of Anti-Populism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020).

calls to domestic abuse helplines escalated by as much as eighty percent in some months;¹⁰¹ more women than men found themselves out of work as employment in retail and hospitality shrank;¹⁰² when schools closed, women – whether working full-time or not – found themselves responsible for more childcare and home schooling than men.¹⁰³ Yet, as the Fawcett Society asserts “women and girls in the UK have been largely invisible from the debate and excluded from decision-making,”¹⁰⁴ while in the US, an article in *The Lancet* reports that: “Despite the WHO Executive Board recognizing the need to include women in decision making for outbreak preparedness and response, there is inadequate women’s representation in national and global COVID-19 policy spaces, such as in the White House Coronavirus Task Force.”¹⁰⁵ In many countries, traditionally male occupations reopened before traditionally female occupations – construction workers returned to work before hairdressers, beauticians, and nursery nurses – and little consideration was given to the shortage of childcare.

¹⁰¹ June Kelly and Sally Graham, “Coronavirus: Domestic Abuse Helpline Sees Lockdown Surge,” *BBC News*, July 23, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53498675> (accessed September 27, 2020); see also Sarah Davidge, Women’s Aid, *A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them* (Bristol: Women’s Aid, 2020), available at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/A-Perfect-Storm-August-2020-1.pdf>.

¹⁰² Anu Madgavkar, Olivia White, Mekala Krishnan, Deepa Mahajan, and Xavier Azcue state: “By our calculation, women’s jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable to this crisis than men’s jobs. Women make up 39 percent of global employment but account for 54 percent of overall job losses” (“COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Countering the Regressive Effects,” McKinsey Global Institute, July 15, 2020, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects#> (accessed September 27, 2020)).

¹⁰³ Several news agencies report a lack of gender equality in the division of labor at home during the pandemic: citing research by University College London, see Richard Adams, “Women ‘Put Careers on Hold’ to Home School During UK Covid-19 Lockdown,” *The Guardian*, July 30, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/30/women-put-careers-on-hold-to-home-school-during-uk-covid-19-lockdown> (accessed September 27, 2020); for research by the *New York Times*, see Claire Cain Miller, “Nearly Half of Men Say They Do Most of the Home Schooling. 3 Percent of Women Agree,” *The New York Times*, May 6, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/upshot/pandemic-chores-homeschooling-gender.html> (accessed September 27, 2020); citing research by the London School of Economics, see Maya Oppenheim, “Coronavirus: Women Bearing Burden of Childcare and Homeschooling in Lockdown, Study Finds,” *Independent*, May 14, 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-childcare-homeschooling-women-lockdown-gender-a9512866.html> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹⁰⁴ Joint Statement by Women’s Organisations, “Coronavirus: Joint Call for Women’s Visibility in UK Response,” The Fawcett Society, March 23, 2020, <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/coronavirus-joint-call-womens-visibility-uk-response> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹⁰⁵ Claire Wenham, Julia Smith, and Rosemary Morgan, “COVID-19: The Gendered Impacts of the Outbreak,” *The Lancet* 395:10227 (2020), 846-848, at 847.

COVID-19 is exacerbating gender and racial inequalities; furthermore, as countries struggle to deal with the crisis, illustrations of populism and nationalism, enmeshed with ‘red pill’ portents, continue to multiply: with Trump referring to the coronavirus as “kung flu,”¹⁰⁶ Bolsonaro acting as figurehead for virus-deniers,¹⁰⁷ evangelical church leaders citing QAnon conspiracy theories alongside biblical passages,¹⁰⁸ and Boris Johnson claiming that the UK’s test and trace operation would be “world beating.”¹⁰⁹ Consequently, when a vaccination becomes available, evangelical Christians and others influenced by QAnon will reject it; amongst others, nationalistic tendencies risk shoring up resources rather than sharing them, hoarding supplies in wealthy nations rather than assisting those in poverty. From the perspective of liberation theology, such an approach is counter to the preferential option for the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. In as much as liberation theology promotes the conscientization of the oppressed, it too is a populist movement, but one characterized by a socio-economic drive for justice and equality rather than an exclusionary and nationalistic ethos. Similarly, although not fully embracing socialism, Side By Side, the interfaith movement for gender justice, have issued a joint statement with the Anglican Communion in which they state: “As religious actors and networks of faith-based organizations, we are called to work together for gender equality and justice, amid global changes, rising nationalism, and conflict.”¹¹⁰ Addressing governments, the Statement asserts: “We advocate for the adoption of

¹⁰⁶ Amanda Walker, “President Trump’s Use of ‘Kung Flu’ Is Embodiment of Path He Has Chosen in Divided Times,” *Sky News*, June 24, 2020, <https://news.sky.com/story/president-trumps-use-of-kung-flu-is-embodiment-of-path-he-has-chosen-in-divided-times-12014064> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹⁰⁷ Uri Friedman, “The Coronavirus-Denial Movement Now Has a Leader,” *The Atlantic*, March 27, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/03/bolsonaro-coronavirus-denial-brazil-trump/608926/> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Burke, “How QAnon Uses Religion to Lure Unsuspecting Christians”, October 15, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/15/us/qanon-religion-churches/index.html> (accessed November 11, 2020).

¹⁰⁹ Alain Tolhurst and Eleanor Langford, “PMQs: Boris Johnson Claims UK Will Have ‘World-Beating’ System to Trace 10,000 Coronavirus Cases Per Day by 1 June,” *Politics Home*, May 20, 2020, <https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/pm-claims-uk-will-have-worldbeating-test-track-and-trace-system-up-and-running-by-1-june> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹¹⁰ *Joint Statement: Gender, Faith and COVID-19*, 1-5 at 1, available at https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/414015/2004-side-by-side_faith-gender-covid19-statement.pdf

gender just policies and funding of COVID-19 response plans that holistically address the pandemic.”¹¹¹ Such advocacy is welcome; a coordinated approach to ensuring that governments’ recovery plans are gender aware is vital if we are to avoid widening the gender pay gap and increasing poverty. Nevertheless, the force of such a statement is weakened given the Church of England’s own track record on gender inequality and its continued use of Provincial Episcopal Visitors (otherwise known as ‘flying bishops’) to appease those who oppose female ordination.¹¹² Likewise, while church leaders were “outraged” when Trump posed with a Bible at St John’s Episcopal Church in Washington D. C. endeavoring to co-opt Christian symbolism in opposition to Black Lives Matter protesters (who were teargassed and forcibly removed prior to his arrival),¹¹³ the Church of England found its attempts at solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement marred by accusations of “utter hypocrisy” from within its own ranks.¹¹⁴ Alwyn Pereira and Augustine Tanner-Ihm publicly recounted their multiple experiences of rejection for appointments based on racial stereotyping by Anglican bishops.¹¹⁵ After the statue of slave trader Edward Colston was pulled down and rolled into the harbor waters in Bristol by Black Lives Matter demonstrators in the UK, Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, proposed forgiving “the ‘trespasses’ of people immortalised in the form of statues, rather than tearing them down.”¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ *Joint Statement*, 4.

¹¹² See https://www.churchofenglandglossary.co.uk/dictionary/definition/flying_bishops

¹¹³ Mario Koran and Helen Sullivan, “Bishop ‘Outraged’ Over Trump’s Church Photo Op During George Floyd Protests,” *The Guardian*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/02/outrageous-christian-leaders-reject-trump-use-of-church-as-prop-during-george-floyd-protests> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹¹⁴ Harriet Sherwood and Roz Scott, “C of E Accused of ‘Utter Hypocrisy’ Over Backing For Black Lives Matter,” *The Guardian*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/10/c-of-e-accused-of-utter-hypocrisy-over-backing-for-black-lives-matter> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹¹⁵ Sherwood and Scott, “C of E Accused of ‘Utter Hypocrisy’ Over Backing For Black Lives Matter,” *The Guardian*, June 10, 2020.

¹¹⁶ Henry McDonald, “C of E Should Rethink Portrayal of Jesus as White, Welby Says,” *The Guardian*, June 26, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/26/church-of-england-justin-welby-white-jesus-black-lives-matter> (accessed September 27, 2020).

Rising to the Challenge

Thus, despite acknowledging the problematic nature of Christian iconography that presents Jesus as White, Welby's response sounds like one that is more concerned with appeasing the erroneous belief that removing statues is erasing history, instead of recognizing that the history of slavery and continued racism have been monumentally erased by the prominence given to such statues in cities and cathedrals across the country. In the end, rather than wholeheartedly affirming that Black lives matter, and substantiating that affirmation with action to right past wrongs and root out systemic racism in the Church, Welby's approach comes across as a feeble 'all lives matter' plea that continues to ride roughshod over the experiences of Black Britons. This failure to engage in anti-racist action, like the failure to fully endorse the ordination of women, leaves the Church hierarchy unable to mount a sufficiently critical and convincing challenge to populist support for racist and misogynistic demagogues who court Christian nationalism, such as Donald Trump in America or Vladimir Putin in Russia.¹¹⁷ The instrumentalization of religion by right-wing populists requires a much stronger defense; in addition, it is not enough to turn a blind eye to QAnon and hope that it will go away. Yet, an approach that seeks to separate 'real' Christians from those with whom one disagrees is fraught with ideological potholes.¹¹⁸ If Christianity is a "living religion",¹¹⁹ it encompasses all those who call themselves Christian; thus, seeking to monopolize 'Christianness' will be unlikely to change the minds of those swayed by the evangelical entanglement with right-wing populism and conspiracy theories. A viable critique of Christian racism, sexism and right-wing politics,

¹¹⁷ Putin has appealed to Russian Orthodox Christianity by promoting traditional family values, reducing sentences for domestic violence within families and banning LGBT information. See Nancy LeTourneau, "How Putin Courted the Groups that Became Trump's Base," *Washington Monthly*, March 12, 2018, <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2018/03/12/how-putin-courted-the-groups-that-became-trumps-base/> (accessed September 27, 2020).

¹¹⁸ See chapter 1 by Ulrich Schmiedel, "Introduction: Political Theology in the Spirit of Populism: Methods and Metaphors" in this volume.

¹¹⁹ See Esther McIntosh, "Living Religion: The Fluidity of Practice," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 79:4 (2018), 383-396.

therefore, must be rooted in the attempt to improve the lives of the most vulnerable. Furthermore, if bishops in the UK are to use their privileged position in the House of Lords to advance equality and a preferential option for the poor, they need to be alert to inequalities of race and gender and to adopt a zero tolerance approach to policies or appointments that ignore or implicitly endorse those inequalities. If church leaders are to be a force for change, they need to utilize their political power to call out prime ministerial braggadocio and to oppose the appointment of known misogynists, such as Tony Abbott,¹²⁰ to advisory roles. At the same time, they need to examine their own institutional and theological foundations and practices: there can be no gender or racial justice in Christianity without wholesale reformation.

¹²⁰ See “Transcript of Julia Gillard’s Speech,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 10, 2012, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/transcript-of-julia-gillards-speech-20121010-27c36.html> (accessed September 27, 2020).