southern state (145). This sudden proclivity for private schools reflected a change in terms but not necessarily belief by white parents: Hawkins explains that "[t]he theology of segregation that evangelicals once employed to thwart racial mixing was recalibrated to endorse a biblically inspired defense of the family" (149). The God who previously demanded racial purity on His say-so now included it under the heading of familial protection. From here it was a short hop to parental control over their children's education. Public school desegregation "undermined God-given parental authority" (163). This "new" argument was no less likely to be criticized by opponents of segregation than the old theological one was. Indeed, as one South Carolina mother put it, "It is a little exasperating that 'private school' has become a dirty word, synonymous with racism and sin" (157). The shift from "God commanded segregation" to a "focus on the family" (150) allowed for the language of parental rights to flourish while bypassing laws that prohibit racial discrimination.

The battle cry of "freedom of choice" in education was linked by segregationist Christians to freedom of religion through the divine institution of the family. This position is unexpectedly timely. When South Carolina created a tuition grant program for students who withdrew from their public schools, the legislature stipulated that grant money could not be used at religiously affiliated schools (138). Today's Supreme Court has, in its recent ruling on religious schools in Maine, surpassed even the wildest dreams of segregationist South Carolina.

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Path to Salvation: The National Socialist Religion. By **Klaus Vondung**. Translated by **William Petropoulos**. South Bend: Augustine Press, 2019. 168 pp. $25.00 cloth.

In this compact study, Klaus Vondung, professor emeritus of German language and literature studies at the University of Siegen, analyzes the language National Socialists employed to create a cult that functioned much like a traditional faith tradition. Further, Vondung demonstrates how National Socialists sought to replicate the faith, commitment, and obedience conventional religions demand.

Vondung investigates the meaning of "redemption" as National Socialists understood it. He argues that their particular definition of redemption went beyond overcoming the defeat of 1918, the parliamentary form of government, and the physical suffering of hungry Germans (10). Vondung traces the concept back at least to the days of the wars against Napoleon. He analyzes how nineteenth-century thinkers like Arndt, Fichte, and others understood the term. An essential element of the early nineteenth-century definition of redemption involves overcoming the enemy as a struggle against evil. The concept of redemption also permeated Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*. German thinkers popularized the idea again during World War I. They did not consider it an intellectual construct but an article of faith. According to Vondung, these largely right-wing thinkers "combined their search for personal meaning with the question of the meaning of the nation and interpreted the latter as

part of their religious quest for redemption" (15). While the thinkers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century considered redemption in this world, the term's association with religious salvation lends the secular concept of national redemption a religious connotation: the redemption from evil and sin (19).

Vondung explains that National Socialists intentionally employed "redemption" because they ultimately desired the people's faith in Hitler and National Socialism, not merely formal party membership. Thus, the regime and especially Hitler created a series of rituals and celebrations akin to religious services. Hitler himself was hailed as the redeemer. Vondung engages critics of categorizing National Socialist practices as a religion. He quotes Hans Mommsen, who argued that it was "in every way a mere imitative movement" (30) and lacked the originality necessary to establish a political religion. Vondung agrees with Mommsen and disagrees with his doctoral advisor, political philosopher Eric Voegelin, who argued that race, blood, and soil constitute the dogmatic center of the National Socialist political religion. Vondung argues that there is no "racially pure blood" and that "the *Volksgemeinschaft* is the production of a dream"(31). Only the Führer was real, and many Germans had faith in him. National Socialists encouraged this faith to secure commitment and readiness for self-sacrifice.

Although Hitler insisted that National Socialism was not a cult, it promoted many cult-like activities. These cultic events, especially the large public assemblies, ceased during the war. Local ceremonies, especially those intended to replace the Christian sacraments, became the focus of cultic activities. Literary criticism became religious because National Socialists believed that literature, especially poetry, gave meaning to life. National Socialism promoted literature to compete with Scripture and other established texts. Thus, the 1933 book burning became a purging of the soul (114).

In the last chapter of the work, Vondung discusses the National Socialist use of the term "apocalypse." He points out that in Greek, "apocalypse" means revelation, as, for example, in the title of the last book of the New Testament. For Hitler, the apocalypse would not sweep down from the heavens but would be brought about by Germans in a great struggle to birth a new nation. To bring about paradise through the apocalypse requires the elimination of the Bolshevik and Jewish enemies. National Socialist leaders often passionately hated Jews, but others, in the words of Götz Aly, engaged without reflection in a "muffled and vague antisemitism." Vondung rejects Daniel Goldhagen's "quasi-genetic" explanation for the German origins of the Holocaust. Instead, he blames it on "a mental and indeed habitual inclination that has been taught in the humanities and social sciences" (134).

Unfortunately, Vondung does not offer a narrative or analytical conclusion. Nonetheless, the study constitutes a nuanced analysis of the importance of religious terminology in justifying National Socialist ideology and gaining Germans' virtually boundless loyalty. From a historian's perspective, there are few things to criticize. First, Vondung does not engage in some controversial historical scholarship on National Socialist religion. He mentions neither Richard Steigmann-Gall's *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity*, nor the many responses to that work, foremost among them that of Doris Bergen. Also, relying in part on Joachim Fest's Hitler biography, now almost fifty years old and superseded by the many excellent biographies such as the ones by Ian Kershaw and Volker Ullrich, is problematic. Finally, while the German edition of Vondung's volume appeared before the annotated edition of *Mein Kampf* was published, the English edition would have benefited from some analysis of Hitler's extensive comments on religion.

Overall, however, this work fulfills its purpose. Vondung shows that while appropriating all that religion offers and demands, ultimately, National Socialism is not a

political religion. The work benefits those scholars who seek to understand how National Socialism won the support of the people. Like Victor Klemperer in *The Language of the Third Reich, Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook*, Vondung's work reminds us of the importance of language itself as historical evidence.

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The Myth of Colorblind Christians: Evangelicals and White Supremacy in the Civil Rights Era. By **Jesse Curtis**. New York: New York University Press, 2021. 291 pp. $32.00 paperback.

In the midst of the tumult of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s, the call for Christian unity was sounded in the United States by black and white evangelicals alike. But, as historian Jesse Curtis makes clear in this important book, black and white conservative Christians understood such unity to mean substantially different things. For black evangelicals, unity in Christ was intended as a rhetorical device to emphasize that black and white believers shared a common humanity and should therefore strive to eradicate white supremacy, especially from churches and Christian colleges and universities. Such eradication would mirror similar fledgling efforts taking root throughout American society by the early 1970s, the fruit of decades of civil rights activism. White evangelicals in this period likewise adopted a rhetoric of Christian unity but arrived at different ends. As Curtis notes, "the exact meaning of unity in Christ proved difficult to pin down" (15). Absent a shared definition of unity in Christ, white evangelicals were able to create a theology of unity that was dramatically different from that of their fellow black Christians. Whereas black Christians believed unity could be achieved by fighting racism, white evangelicals sought unity in Christ through an embrace of colorblindness, wherein addressing systemic racism was unnecessary because race itself no longer mattered at the foot of the cross where all believers had equal standing. Curtis contends, however, that this supposed colorblind equality was neither truly colorblind, nor did it produce equality. The "myth" of colorblind Christians indicated in Curtis's title refers to the fact that, far from being inattentive to race, white evangelicals in the wake of the civil rights movement used their ostensible "colorblindness" to reinforce *white* evangelicalism as normative (3). Furthermore, these white evangelicals even used colorblindness and its concomitant inattentiveness to structural inequities to define the boundaries of their identity *as* evangelicals (7). Ultimately, Curtis argues, by adopting colorblindness "whiteness was dethroned in name (within evangelicalism), but not decentered in practice" (213). Meanwhile, Curtis notes, "the avowed opposition to race consciousness, rooted in a colorblind interpretation of the Bible, became the primary *defense* of the American religio-racial hierarchy rather than a challenge to it" (8). Birthed over a half century ago, Curtis argues that this colorblindness continues to reign supreme within evangelicalism today because it "powered. . . a new theology of race that proclaimed equality while protecting implicit whiteness" (212).

Curtis unpacks his argument by tracking the rise of evangelical colorblindness in Christian colleges and parachurch organizations that wielded influence on evangelical