

---

## Introduction

*Paolo Barcella and Chiara Migliori*

The “Western hemisphere” has entered the twenty-first century plagued by a resurgence of right-wing and extreme-right ideological movements which found, in their intersection with Christianity, a renewed, powerful platform to advance nativist and nationalist agendas. The scholarly debate surrounding these topics, far from having begun in the new millennium, has experienced in the last decade a new vitality and a flourishing of literature that draws from events, narratives, and political actors having their ideological roots in the twentieth century but finding heightened activity and resonance in the present moment. This issue of *Ácoma* is dedicated to exploring past and current manifestations of the so-called religious right in the United States and in Europe. Investigating the intersection between conservative politics, Protestantism, and Catholicism, and touching upon issues ranging from the right to abortion to what is now labeled “gender-ideology”, this issue of the journal discusses and explains the phenomenon of the religious right in the twenty-first century, and joins a conversation that is of great consequence for the times we live in.

## Religious Far Right in the U.S.

*Giovanni Borgognone*

The article aims to show how right-wing political evangelicalism in the United States shifted from the “high ideal” of realizing the Christian nation in America to the project of separate identity communities, immune from the evils of modernity. A turning point for the rise of an evangelical right is identified in the 1970s Supreme Court decision in *Coit v. Green* (1971), establishing that a private school practicing racial discrimination could not be eligible for tax exemption. Some evangelical leaders, accordingly, defended segregationist academies in the name of religious freedom. In the following years they found in the crusade against abortion a more suitable issue to unite all Christians. Demographic changes, however, made the idea that Christian America, albeit including Catholics, could constitute the country’s “moral majority” increasingly problematic. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, new visions of identity emerged. The final part of the essay focuses, in this perspective, on “neo-monastic” projects of

building isolated Christian communities, and reads them as signs of a crisis in the Christian nation narrative.

**Truth, Order, Obedience. Catholic Right in the U.S.**

*Cristina Mattiello*

This article explores the political attitudes of the United States Catholic Church by focusing on Conservatism in its widest meaning, from socio-economic liberalism to nationalism, militarism and patriotism. It also points out how the hierarchy has shaped the whole process taking into account the complex interactions between the need to listen to the faithful, the need to remain loyal to the Pope, and the need to be legitimized as an “American” institution. The analysis is articulated in a historical perspective, distinguishing among various eras: : origins, slavery and the Civil War, twentieth century wars, the Forties, the Fifties, Council Vatican II, and contemporary conflicts up to the attack on Capitol Hill.

**The Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement Party, MSI) and the Neoliberal Right**

*Gregorio Sorigonà*

The essay focuses on how the political culture of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) was influenced by the themes promoted by Ronald Reagan, and more generally by the neoliberal right, from the late 1970s to the 1980s. In those years the MSI was the only Italian party to place itself on the right of the political spectrum, but it was also the only one to express a positive and nostalgic vision of fascism. Since the beginning of the Reagan presidency, the MSI strongly supported its international and domestic policies and espoused the traditionalist perspectives of the neoliberal right regarding the idea of family, abortion, and gender relations. The call of the neoliberal right was “translated” to match the identity of the MSI, as the political and economic culture of the party became increasingly sensitive to neoliberal positions.

---

## **Education Wars. Hillsdale College and American Right Project to Take over Schools**

*Pietro Bianchi*

Hillsdale College, a small Southern Michigan Liberal Arts College, has become in recent years a crucial place for American right-wing project of taking over public education and promoting a conservative agenda. In addition to having hosted talks from some of the most prominent Republican Party leaders, and having received donations from Michigan's wealthiest families, Hillsdale offers courses whose curriculum focuses on an originalist interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. In that curriculum, progressive tradition and, recently, Critical Race Theory and Gender Studies are constantly targeted. But in recent years it has become clear that the true goal for such a conservative hegemonic project on education is to influence the K-12 public system of schools. In order to reach that goal, Hillsdale promotes a so-called "1776 curriculum" that aims to extend conservative-leaning teaching to public schools as well as to a newly funded system of Hillsdale charter schools.

## **Anti-abortion as Identity War: The Far Right and Women's Body**

*Giorgia Serughetti*

From Poland to the United States, from Brazil to Italy, the chronicle of recent years has documented the multiplication of efforts by conservative parties and movements, particularly those belonging to what is termed the "populist radical right", to restrict, or even eliminate, the legal possibility of women's access to voluntary and therapeutic abortion. This essay intends to show, firstly, how anti-abortionism represents an essential component of the conservative doctrine on family and sexuality, which in turn constitutes a pillar of this right-wing identity politics. Secondly, it aims to highlight, alongside aspects that are typical of traditional conservatism, the use of new discursive and political strategies designed to present opposition to abortion as compatible with the main values of democratic-liberal systems: human rights, equal freedom, and solidarity. Finally, by deconstructing these strategies, and showing their connection to an exclusivist interpretation of "the people" and a hierarchical view of society, the essay comes to describe the ideology of the populist radical

right as anti-emancipatory and anti-egalitarian – therefore, ultimately, anti-democratic.

### **Religious Radical Right Against Gender**

*Chiara Migliori*

This essay examines the discourse of organizations associated with the religious right and by radical right groups, through the lens of Converse's right-wing ideological constraint. It focuses on the convergence of the themes of the nation as a family, and of the supposed Christian origins, traditions, and identity of the "Western civilization", within a narrative that is being increasingly adopted by both religious and radical right groups advocating for various forms of nationalism, nativism, and authoritarianism. Drawing on the narrative of a prominent religion-based US organization and questioning the supposed imposition of gender ideology through governmental measures, this essay aims to highlight the concept of gender, as deployed by religious-right and radical right groups, as the umbrella term representing the threats supposedly endangering traditional families and the whole fabric of "Western civilization".

### **Trump's Settler Liberal Fascism**

*Donald E. Pease*

What explains the emergence of a 21<sup>st</sup> century American populist movement notorious for its attacks on equal rights, civil liberties, social justice, and basic norms of tolerance and civility? Across the post-World War II era US citizens customarily expected this sort of intolerant and uncivil behavior from the illiberal totalitarian Other against whose mode of fascist governance US liberal democracy was insuperably opposed. The members of Trump's Make America Great Again movement bear a resemblance to the illiberal political behavior of European fascists. Yet Trump's movement derives its political and historical efficacy from its revival of a subversively archaic variant of American liberalism practiced by American settler colonists whose ethnic cleansing of indigenous peoples, slave plantations, and nation-making frontier violence, laid the bedrock foundations for the venerated liberal ideals of self-governance, rule of law, free

labor, private property, and the liberal international order. The essay is divided into sections that engage four distinct but related conjunctural moments in the trajectory of Trump's movement.