

Fr. Perozich comments —

Jason Morgan’s commentary on the elites’ global oppression over the average man and woman rings true to me. Such elites are in politics, academics, finance, law, science, and religion.

Lower ranking elites, in imitation of their powerful leaders, attempt to save themselves, to advance their earthly lives without reference to God except to use His name and co-opt His words to fit their agenda.

It doesn’t take much to make the connections to actual persons as I read his article.

Jason hints at it in his youthful East Tennessee Christian experience.
— **Jesus is the answer.**

The formatting, bolding, and colorizing are my own attempts to highlight some important points.

The Exalted & the Despised

CRAZED DISUNITY

By Jason M. Morgan | December 2023

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Oliver Anthony’s barebones hit song knocked me flat when I first heard it earlier this year. “Rich Men North of Richmond,” Anthony sings from somewhere in the backwoods of western Virginia, have laid the country low. Working men and women are forgotten while the globalist elite — we all know whom he means — disport themselves with “minors on an island somewhere.” I haven’t heard social commentary that cuts like Anthony’s since Bob Dylan railed against the justice system that allowed rich-kid

William Zantinger to get away with murder and the ingrown good-old-boy corruption that brought down boxer Rubin Carter. Yes, it's just as Anthony puts it. The "rich men north of Richmond" and their upper-crust compatriots are light years away from the rest of us.

I went to high school in a small town in eastern Tennessee where a lot of people looked and talked like Anthony does. From Manhattan, or that 'burb north of Richmond, Anthony and our ilk must look like bigoted ignoramuses. The reality is so very different. What I remember is an openness of spirit in the Appalachian foothills. We didn't care about the rich men north of Richmond. What happened in Washington, D.C., was the no-good scheming of those who had forgotten God. We did our best to love everybody equally, for eastern Tennessee is in the Bible Belt, and loving our neighbor is what Jesus taught us to do. One of the wealthiest students at our down-in-the-mouth high school was a black girl, my friend. I remember going to her huge home and being warmly welcomed. **There was a camaraderie in simply being fellow human beings. Some people were rich, most were poor, but nobody paid those accidents of birth much attention. We were happy then, innocent of envy.**

How times have changed.

One day, a boy in our class, whose father worked at a local mechanic shop, gave a presentation on the North American Free Trade Agreement. He was against it. We had heard of NAFTA in passing; it was in the news at the time. I had no idea what it really was, and I suspect not many others at our place of learning did either. **NAFTA would take blue-collar jobs away**, the mechanic's son warned. Almost all our parents were blue-collar workers, so we should have listened. But we were too busy living the Tennessee highlife — lake swimming and porch swinging, as carefree as you please — to pay much attention. Thirty years later, though, what our classmate prophesied has come to pass. **Those who once worked with their hands now wring those**

same hands in worry. The jobs are gone or the paychecks throttled. The rich men north of Richmond got richer, and we got nothing out of the deal but their contempt.

It's too easy to dismiss the changes in America since then as functions of economics. The Trump phenomenon has been parsed this way a thousand times — the “politics of resentment,” some call it. Those left behind by globalization rebelled against the establishment and took out their frustration on those who had clambered to the top of a new, internationalized America, laid over the rusted-out ruins of the old nation-state. “Learn to program,” then-candidate Joe Biden advised out-of-work coal miners in 2019. Those of us who didn't, so the conventional wisdom goes, must be put out about how well off those are who did.

Anthony, too, got the globalist talking-to when a rich man north of Richmond tried to pigeon-hole him into the Resentful Working Man paradigm. “My brother in Christ, you live in the United States of America in 2023,” wrote Mark Antonio Wright, executive editor of the elite-coddling East Coast magazine *National Review* (Aug. 14). “If you're a fit, able-bodied man, and you're working ‘overtime hours for bulls**t pay’ [as Anthony sings], you need to find a new job.” How simple things look from offices in tall buildings.

Do I come off as huffy? Those of us who live or have lived in Oliver Anthony's America are looked down on from every height, so perhaps we can be forgiven a little politics of resentment, if that's what it is. But looking back on the past three decades, especially the past three years, there's something deeper going on than the classic Marxian discord between the haves and have-nots. Things don't map out nearly as neatly as the class-struggle analysis wants it to. If anything, attempts to explain the divides in American life are as manic as the splitting in the polity itself. The Black Lives Matter riots and the concomitant assertion that everyone is either preternaturally racist or irredeemably

oppressed, the rhetoric about disaffected MAGA voters versus educated urbanites — none of this comes close to explaining why and how we have gone our separate ways. Those things are spinoffs of something graver. A sinister division exists, and it's not just a matter of who has how much money in which bank account.

Far more important than being from north or south of Richmond is character, for one thing. **When character disintegrates, people form ugly little cliques around shared, secret vices.** In my career in academia, I have seen this play out. **I have witnessed the slow, steady disappearance of integrity, honesty, and joy. There is a kind of hateful belonging at work in gatherings of ambitious, characterless people who see themselves as smarter and better than everyone else.** In graduate-school seminars, and now in academic debates, people regularly, almost compulsively, adapt their opinions to whatever they perceive to be the majority position of the hour. There is no truth or even a post-truth; there is just blood in the water and a Hobbesian war to be survived.

Most people in academia will say anything to keep their titles and their salaries. The grandstanding in which academics like to engage about “speaking truth to power” is the opposite. **Those with lobotomized consciences speak power's truth, and they speak it out of a deep and shameful fear of being thought anything but cynically cunning.** Academics aren't really Marxists anymore. Marxists die for Marxism. **Today's academics are chameleons with pensions, and they'll take on any background pattern to stay in the rank-and-salary game.**

Nobody in academia is willing to make a definitive assertion or even countenance such boldness in the first place. When someone — when I was in grad school it was almost always just me — takes a contrary position to the royal “we,” he (or she or xe — you must supply pronouns now, because nobody is willing to go out on a limb about even that) is met with expressions of

discomfit, even dismay. I wasn't seeking anyone's approval or expecting anyone to agree with me. I stated what I thought and then fell silent, waiting for someone else to counter with a different point of view. But nobody ever did, at least not directly. They still don't. Instead, they caucus on Twitter afterwards, grooming one another's ruffled feathers and trying to convince themselves, obliquely, that insisting on truth is a form of fascism or actual violence. The herd cannot speak through any individual. Individuals speak only to placate the herd.

It isn't the fault of social media. That's where we go to vent our hate as a way to bind ourselves together in iniquity. But those virtual vectors merely amplify the unease. And anyway, they're just symptoms of a more serious condition, which is much more complex than being from opposite sides of the tracks. We are riven at the deepest level, separated from and pitted against one another in a kind of Valhalla of the afraid. **We lash out at one another, because we hate living in the world we have made.** In this Hell, we have only others whom we hate. They are our curse and our comfort. So we cling to our co-herdists even as we go for the jugular.

I was thinking of all this when a longtime California resident of East-Asian birth contacted me a while back.

"I have had a life changing experience through the American judicial system," wrote Tokuko Sylvester (née Hirano). "In 2010, I filed a lawsuit against a doctor. However, through the California legal procedure, I have found that there is no real due process, no real fairness, no real equal protection. These privileges are only for those who have lots of money. Without money, the court treats you as a second-class citizen. American democracy does not exist, unless you have a large sum of money and/or political power. The entire judicial system works like a mafia. Only those with money win a lawsuit."

This is, of course, a common problem in America. People with money use the courts as an extension of their back offices —

or as their brass-knuckled henchmen, to continue the mafia metaphor. People without money, by contrast, walk into courtrooms the way cows walk into a slaughterhouse. But there is something else in what my friend wrote that caught my attention. The two-tier-justice problem is not just pervasive and systemic, she argued, it is historically conditioned, part of the dominant elite's DNA.

“Judges don't think even a bit about ‘an unfair playground’ for litigants without lawyers,” Tokuko continued. **“That's because, for them, unfairness is normal. Unfair treatment against a second-class citizen is normal. They do not have a keen sense of right and wrong. In other words, they lack true humanity.** Many Americans are not even aware of this lack of humanity in American society.

“American history started with inequality and exploitation of others (for instance, white exploitation of blacks and Native Americans), and so the elites accept it naturally and have no resistance when they see someone exploiting others, or someone being exploited by others. People seem to accept without question, without even noticing it, that there is never really true equality. People speak a lot about being equal but act as though it is not necessary to treat people equally.”

It is true that there is a two-tier justice system in the United States. Republicans will think here of Hunter Biden, and Democrats of Bush v. Gore. But in light of my friend's pointed critique, these political explanations seem as unsatisfying as the ones tracking race or tax brackets. Isn't division the entire engine of what we call politics? It seems that what we are trying to do in politics is find some working model for the two-tier anthropology we have set up between first- and second-class citizens, between the exalted and the despised.

Though the contrast between monied elites with fancy lawyers and regular citizens who often must represent themselves

skews Marxian, the truth is that the old categories of class, politics, and education have given way to a deep-down hatred for one another that traditional social sets can no longer begin to explain. Take politics. To idealize history a bit, the Democratic and Republican parties may once have been political groupings, and elections about policy choices and steering the ship of state, but today “Democrat” and “Republican” are code words for the two sides of the furious inclusion and exclusion that have come to define our national life. **Some people must be despised so others can feel exalted. The goal is for the exalted to be able to swallow their existential fear of living in a meaningless, post-Christian wasteland.** Trump was not a Republican like Eisenhower and Reagan were, nor is Biden a Democrat in the mold of Kennedy or even Clinton. And I don’t mean on a policy level. Trump and Biden, and others who carry the standards of in-grouping and out-grouping, are avatars for some soul-level rupture that seems to force us to join a milling crowd or assert our savviness to truths the crowd cannot discern. Who is woke, who is anti-woke — these are also unwieldy metaphors for something inarticulable. **We are either exalted or despised.** We embrace the label — progressive or deplorable, A-lister or 99-percenter. But in the end, we are caught in this mad duality that is, at bottom, premised on the denial of our dignity as human beings.

How deep does the division go, and what is it made of? Look at how the weakest are treated to know how the strongest see the social landscape. This fall, some pro-lifers were found guilty in a Washington, D.C., court of violating federal statutes protecting access to abortion clinics. They, including my friend Will Goodman, face up to 11 years in a federal penitentiary. Their crime? In October 2020 they went into a Washington, D.C., abortuary run by the notorious Cesare Santangelo, who quite literally butchers babies for money. There, they tried to keep women and their children from falling into the butcher’s clutches.

Earlier, some of those pro-lifers, led by Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising (PAAU) founder Lauren Handy, had recovered at the same abortuary the remains of 115 children who had never seen the light of day. They were grotesquely dismembered; some had had their skulls crushed. I will never forget the wide-open, unseeing eye of a little girl the group named Harriet. She stared into infinity from an ending of horrific pain. But at the trial, the judge, a member of the exalted class, refused to let images of Harriet and the other murdered babies be introduced as evidence. **Those who occupy the heights of the cultural topography need, deep down, to pretend as though the valley dwellers do not exist.**

A few years ago, I wrote in these pages about the homo sacer and how excluding certain people is the foundation of liberal modernity (“The Nowhere Between Life & Death,” Jan.-Feb. 2021; “Why the Modern Democratic State Needs Abortable Children,” March 2021). What I didn’t understand then was the depth of hatred the very fact of the homo sacer implies. It is more than just a concept in political philosophy. My mind goes back to Harriet. Why do some hate her so? Why do they hate so much that they kill and then act as though the dispatched had never even existed? Through the despised aborted, I have come to believe that what I have seen in my lifetime — **this crazed disunity of the exalted and the despised — is not political, not economic, not social, not cultural, and not even human in many ways. It is diabolical.**

The Catholic Church is not just an earthly organization but a supernatural power that, in our world, keeps other supernatural powers at bay. Metaphysics is not an adjunct to the material universe but prior to it. Angels and demons don’t live in our world; we pass our time in theirs. As any exorcist will tell you, what holds back the evil ones is Christ crucified.

The mystery of iniquity is kept in check by the One who overcame it. That One is on the altars of the world, not as decoration but as the last and only defense against a murderous and immortal gang moving among us. Hate is, ultimately, of otherworldly origin. The Church is our refuge from it. Without the Church, we are the Devil's playthings.

The span of my lifetime bears this out with terrible accuracy. **As the Church has unraveled and the moral force of the papacy has become, let's admit it, something of a running joke, mankind's ancient Enemy has gained more and more run of the world.** In this demonic tempest, as one old certainty after another falls, **men struggle in vain to make sense of the absence of God.** Everything becomes a proxy for the confusion, and we can identify our tribe only by naming common enemies. We become, without charity and grace, the in-crowd and the outsiders, the exalted and the despised.

In a world without God, or even the notion of His having been forgotten, ghoulish hatred oozes out of every cultural and geopolitical pore. Ukraine, Hamas, the coronavirus, the national anthem, the national debt, the sex of our bodies, the color of our skin — all these get taken up into the storm. What we call the “news” is a series of whetstones on which to sharpen our hate for one another. Each new headline is a new reason to cast our neighbor further into the outer darkness, if only so we might feel more secure in the inner darkness we have staked out as our own. We feel we can navigate the hatred only by gaining some foothold in the division it engenders. So, we take control of hate by hating in what we try to tell ourselves is a rational, justified way. Words are violence, we say, as we evict some group or another from “our” spaces. The very word for this, canceling, speaks volumes. And the word spaces speaks more — a place is where people are; a space is just geometric extension. Like

Hell, space is pure, cold geometry, a dimension without any opening, a point without any lines.

We recycle these little offices of hatred over and over in our daily lives. **The old Adam has become not our second nature but our first.** Surely, I am not the only one who has shaken his head while watching yet another viral video of people beating the daylights out of one another in the stands of a football game. People even beat the daylights out of one another at Disneyworld. People draw guns on one another at traffic lights. People come unglued on airplanes. People rage in movie theaters over mistaken seating assignments. The Internet has become a gigantic Colosseum, and into it, seemingly at random, we thrust the unknown to stand alone and suffer ridicule, there to do battle against all the anonymous rest of us. When that happens, we're all little Roman emperors, exalted in our hateful herd, and we all get to decide whether the despised of the hour gets to live or die. If it's death we choose, then we pronounce the accidental warrior a racist or a bigot and enjoy watching him squirm, grovel, bargain, and shout defiance as time runs out. He didn't deserve to live anyway. He was a despicable human being, a homo sacer.

The structure of our daily existence is thus a kind of limbo, a reverse Purgatory in which we inch ever closer to the Hell we've replicated on Earth. We are, each of us, always a moment away from being spotlighted and dehumanized. Oliver Anthony isn't singing a union song about holding out for higher pay. The days of having sold one's soul to the company store are long gone. He's keening the fall of our humanity. Rich men north of Richmond stand at the vanguard of our deracinated, hate-filled future. **We can either try to be like them and win for ourselves a false sense of security in not being the homo sacer of the hour, or we can be marked for death in a public forum.**

Globalism is built on this. It's not a class thing. It's not an economic or political arrangement. **It's a way of staving off the demons by imitating them, of clustering in a way that**

undoes allegiance to country, family, and religion. Rich men north of Richmond would appear to leave us with no choice: in or out, but the game, they insist, is theirs. **There is no Holy Ghost where globalism takes hold — no reconciliation, forgiveness, or grace.** Globalists and those who have thrown in their lot with them — the exalted who hope to remain among the untargeted — huddle in terrified herdings and call it interconnectivity, a world made one. What looks like a global community is a planetary rehearsal for Hell. The Devil's greatest trick was to get us to stop believing in him. His second greatest trick has been to get us to act as he does, to hate from within a cavernous, lonely, ruined wasteland, and to call it **diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

“Been sellin’ my soul,” Anthony laments. But nobody wants to buy the souls of the despised. Least of all the exalted, who act as though they never had souls to lose in the first place.

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