Twitter Thread by Jack Jenkins



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1. I don’t think I’m exaggerating when I say that if you want to understand the big political stories from January—from faith-infused insurrection to Warnock’s victory to Biden’s inauguration—you really need to understand two things: Christian nationalism and the Religious Left.

2. As for the Religious Left: less has been written on this topic than Christian nationalism, for various reasons.

We’ll come back to this, but Warnock’s victory is part of a modern resurgence of the RL, which (and I’m biased here) I chronicle in my book: https://t.co/APQ8JsvfNq

3. I talk about Christian nationalism in my book, but basically: it’s an old tradition, but it’s modern iteration is particularly intense, and particularly centered on Trump.

Here’s an intro, but much smarter people have written way better stuff about it: https://t.co/Q0tVWUdgld

4. Much more exhaustive works chronicling the movement’s sociological impact/cultural history/political machinations include this: https://t.co/t7OPhsDy2q

This: https://t.co/6SaOk9Q2S3

This: https://t.co/Zq4UROnxr2

This: https://t.co/jUqNd5cryL

& This: https://t.co/mhU7ACbrAZ

5. There’s MUCH more, and @sarahposner’s article from today gives insight into why this movement—which has been building for years—was so well represented at the insurrection.

Put another way: they’re a big part of why Trump got elected in the first place https://t.co/uSkkrrskut

6. But let’s circle back for a second: it’s worth noting that back in 2017, Warnock was at the Capitol himself.

Getting arrested.

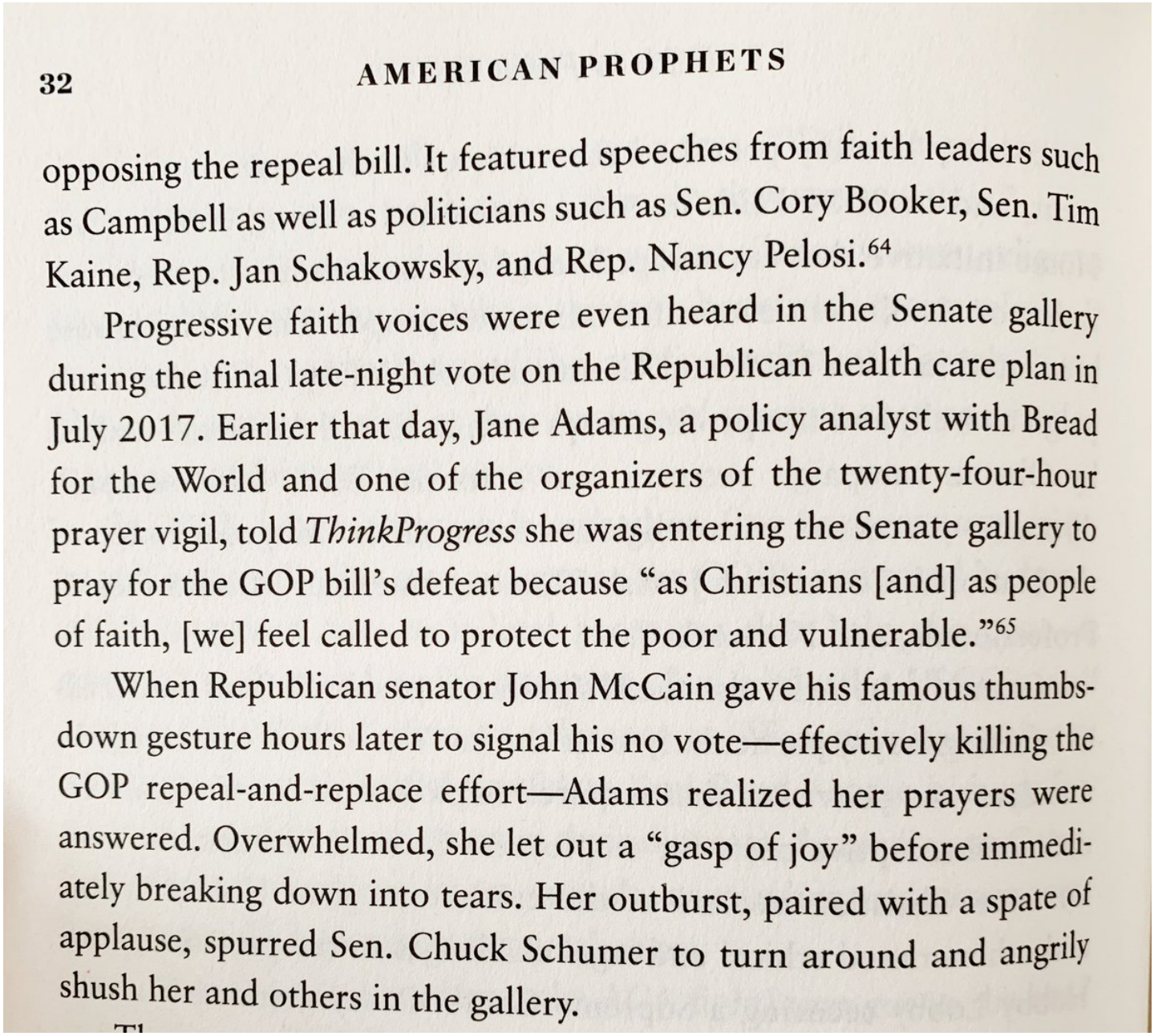
For protesting the GOP-led effort to repeal/replace the Affordable Care Act. https://t.co/5rIIdz792i

7. Such is the oft-ignored story of the Religious Left, which has spent the last few years often *leading* "resistance" efforts.

E.g., Warnock's Capitol arrest was part of a MUCH larger protest campaign by liberal religious advocates to save the ACA. https://t.co/vGxHCKL7Ue

8. Women's March, climate activism, immigrant rights—over and over, protest efforts under Trump featured prominent liberal people of faith as organizers.

Heck, when McCain gave his "thumbs down" to the ACA repeal, the sound you heard was LITERALLY RL activists gasping w/relief.



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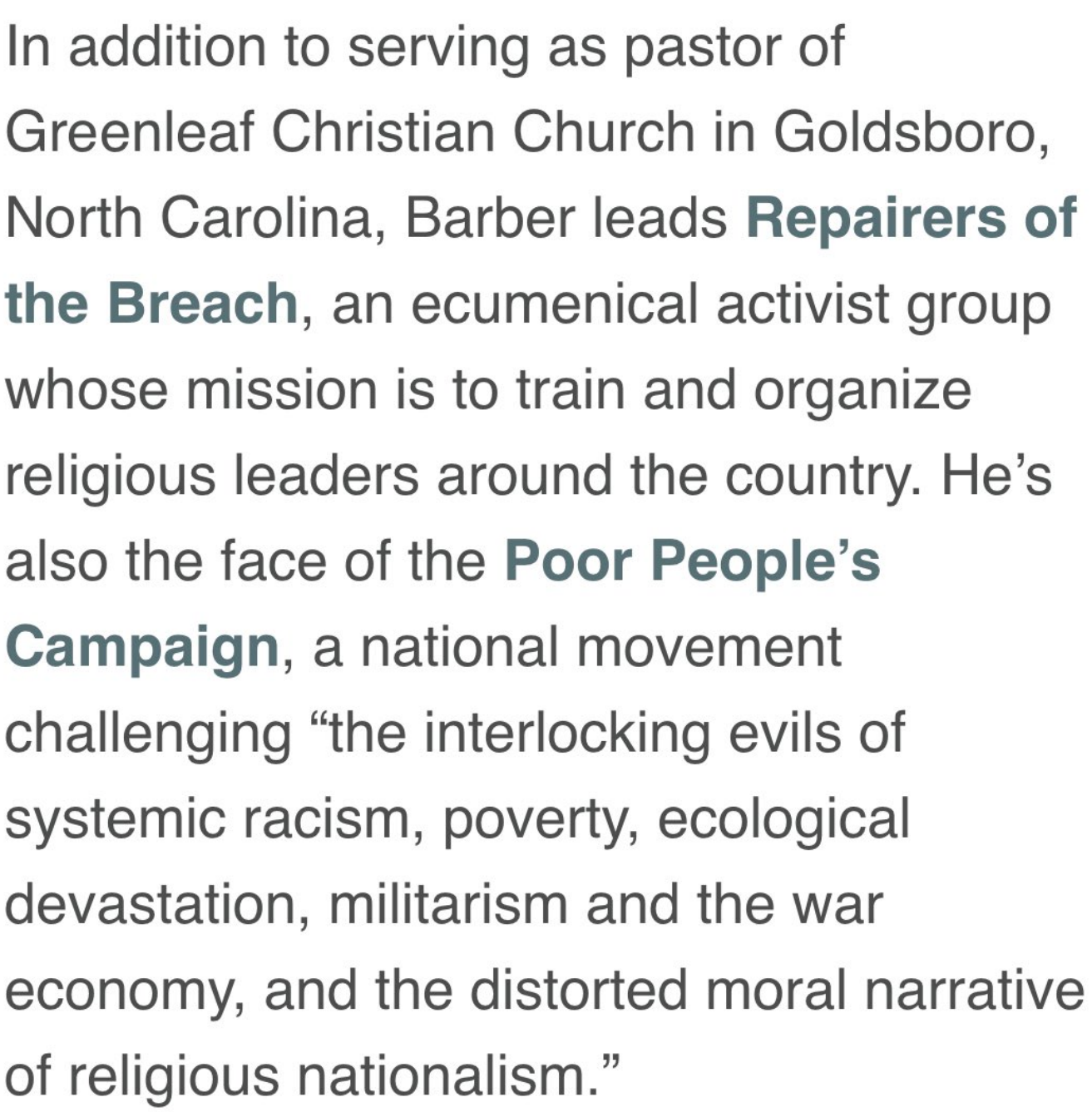
opposing the repeal bill. It featured speeches from faith leaders such as Campbell as well as politicians such as Sen. Cory Booker, Sen. Tim Kaine, Rep. Jan Schakowsky, and Rep. Nancy Pelosi.[64]

Progressive faith voices were even heard in the Senate gallery during the final late-night vote on the Republican health care plan in July 2017. Earlier that day, Jane Adams, a policy analyst with Bread for the World and one of the organizers of the twenty-four-hour prayer vigil, told *ThinkProgress* she was entering the Senate gallery to pray for the GOP bill's defeat because "as Christians [and] as people of faith, [we] feel called to protect the poor and vulnerable."[65]

When Republican senator John McCain gave his famous thumbs-down gesture hours later to signal his no vote—effectively killing the GOP repeal-and-replace effort—Adams realized her prayers were answered. Overwhelmed, she let out a "gasp of joy" before immediately breaking down into tears. Her outburst, paired with a spate of applause, spurred Sen. Chuck Schumer to turn around and angrily shush her and others in the gallery.

9. And as they began occupying more space in liberal circles, faith activists also increasingly framed themselves as a counterbalance to another movement: Christian nationalism.

In fact, leaders like Rev. William Barber began listing it as one of America's "interlocking evils."



10. (Note: Technically Barber usually calls it "religious nationalism" for various reasons, but as his frequent collaborator Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove notes, he is very much talking about the same movement). https://t.co/DQZrmy8zaK

> The #PoorPeoplesCampaign names Christian nationalism as an interlocking injustice w/ racism, poverty, militarism & ecological devastation. I hope folks who are paying attention to this dangerous moral narrative also know there\u2019s a better way to practice faith in public.
>
> — Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (@wilsonhartgrove) January 29, 2021

11. Anyway, Barber and others even tried to hold a debate in 2017 with Religious Right leaders some eventually would cast as Christian nationalists, to no avail.

Meanwhile, (mostly) liberal Christians founded Christians Against Christian Nationalism. https://t.co/eain5f6TGo

12. The two efforts would eventually come into direct conflict.

E.g., in December, when Trump supporters gathered in DC, there was the often Christian nationalist “Jericho March.”

Speakers from that event would later pray for Proud Boys as they marched into the streets of DC…

The Jericho March was emceed by evangelical commentator Eric Metaxas, who was filmed punching an anti-Trump demonstrator off his bike earlier this year. The event did not feature speeches from members of the "Proud Boys."

At least three men who spoke at the Jericho March — including conspiracy theorist Alex Jones — addressed a crowd outside Washington's JW Marriott Hotel later that same evening. Footage of the event showed a number of men in Proud Boys attire among the crowd. As they began to leave, Jones praised them for "marching off to take this city's streets back."

He then added: "We pray for them, and we salute the Proud Boys!"

13. …where they enacted violence and turned their anger disproportionately on one thing: the Black Lives Matter signs of liberal-leaning churches, including 2 historic Black churches.

…And the churches just kept replacing the stolen/destroyed signs. https://t.co/fOjXskxhQh

14. All of which helps explain why, the day of the insurrection, there was — to my knowledge — exactly one major counter-protest to the Trump supporters who had descended on the city.

It was a group of clergy gathered around a BLM sign. https://t.co/KPu1KU7How

15. Meanwhile, Biden, who constantly referenced faith on the campaign trail and spoke at Religious Left events hosted by Barber (who rejects that term), has won the presidency.

Warnock, who was attacked for his liberal religious beliefs, won in Georgia. https://t.co/QfLXUYE2Vn

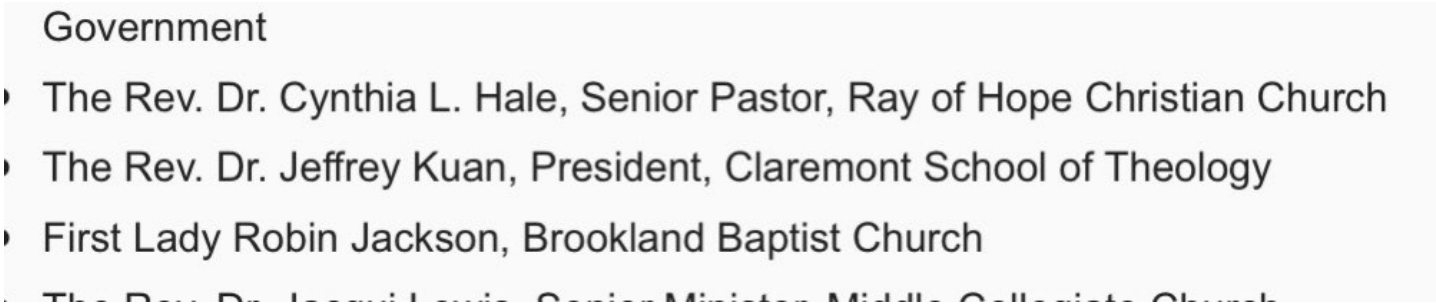
16. So when it came time for Biden's inauguration, the new POTUS started his day at church.

And the inaugural prayer service? It was FILLED with clergy who protested against Trump during his tenure, and the preacher was none other than William Barber. https://t.co/RIgm9Bvu8u

17. In fact: remember that ACA protest where Warnock got arrested?

Also there protesting with him that week was Cynthia L. Hale, senior pastor of Ray of Hope Christian Church in Georgia.

Naturally, she was a speaker at the inaugural prayer service. https://t.co/5rIIdz792i



18. In sum: Christian nationalism was on full display at the Capitol insurrection, which makes sense: it was a big part of Trump's movement.

But as they rose, Christian nationalism arguably only made the Religious Left stronger — even to the point of helping them win elections.

19. There are MANY other examples (e.g., Doug Jones' victory over explicit Christian nationalist Roy Moore), and worth noting the RL is SUPER complicated and existed LONG before Trump.

But if you want to understand the months/years ahead, it's helpful to know how we got here.

20. Anyway, read all those other books. And read all the fantastic articles from my colleagues in the religion reporting world (including some who've been v diligent in covering the RL).

Then, if you're bored, there's a lot more on all this in my book: https://t.co/APQ8JsvfNq

21. Oh also: there are many Christian references here, but worth noting that the modern Religious Left is deeply interfaith.

That was a big part of the pushback to Trump as well; e.g., Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and others often argued they were targeted by Trump or his supporters.