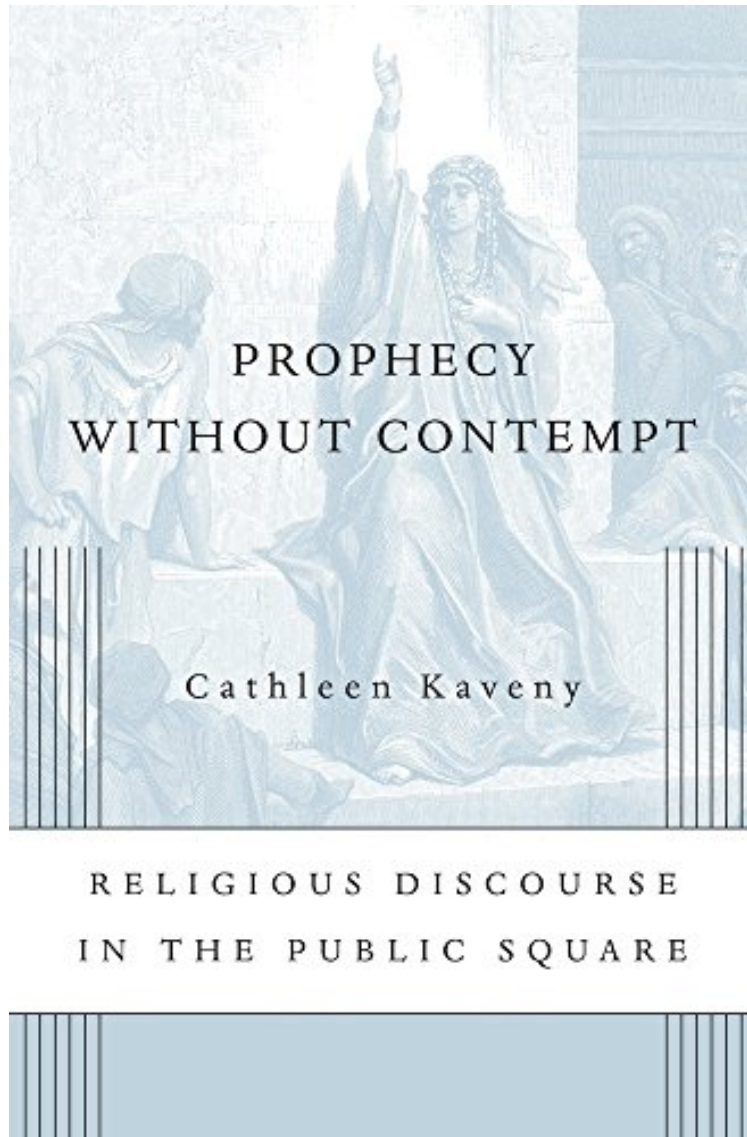


Prophecy without Contempt: Religious Discourse in the Public Square

Cathleen Kaveny

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nice experience. Thank you. 5 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Timely discussion! By Thomas J. Farrell

Out of ancient Greek culture, the prophet/philosopher Socrates emerged. In Athens during the experiment in limited participatory democracy, he made a big impression on impressionable young men such as Plato. Tragically, Socrates was brought to trial on trumped up charges, found guilty, and executed. His grief-stricken follower Plato memorialized him as the fictional character named Socrates in his artfully written dialogues. It has famously been said that all of Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato. Over the centuries, footnotes to Plato have been written by secularists, Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Our American experiment in representative democracy emerged out of the philosophical thought of the Enlightenment (also known as the Age of Reason). As a result, figuratively speaking, we Americans are living footnotes to Plato, including those Americans who have not cultivated a philosophical mind. But in American culture today, we still have a certain number of professors of philosophy in academia who try to make a big impression on impressionable young men and women enticing them to cultivate the philosophical mind. But a few centuries after the prophet/philosopher Socrates' tragic death in Athens, a religious prophet named Jesus of Nazareth emerged out of the matrix of the ancient Hebrew religious culture that is now memorialized in the Hebrew Bible. In Jerusalem at the time of the festival of the Passover one year, something happened involving Jesus. As a result, he was brought before the local authorities of the Roman Empire on trumped up charges, found guilty, and executed by crucifixion, as Paula Fredriksen explains in her book *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (Knopf, 1999). But his grief-stricken followers memorialized his life and tragic death by constructing the greatest story ever told with Jesus portrayed as the long-awaited Messiah (also known as the Christ). In American culture today, we still have a certain number of Christians. Historically in American culture, the tradition of freedom of religion (i.e., no established church) emerged in our experiment with representative democracy, alongside the tradition of free speech (i.e., free political speech) and the tradition of separating church and state. But political speech involves articulating and expressing political values. But where do our political values in American culture come from? Do the political values expressed in our founding documents (the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and its Amendments) express the grand total of our political values? But doesn't our practice of occasionally voting in new amendments show that as our American culture continues along its evolutionary trajectory we tend to articulate and express evolving new political values? But does our American tradition of separating church and state mean that only political values emerging from our American states' official documents, including of course the various amendments, should be discussed in the so-called public square? This brings me to the American Catholic law professor M. Cathleen Kaveny's new book *Prophecy without Contempt: Religious Discourse in the Public Square* (Harvard University Press, 2016). Kaveny is the Darald and Juliet Libby Professor at Boston College, a Jesuit university, a position which allows her to teach in both the department of theology and the law school. She did her undergraduate studies at Princeton University and graduated *summa cum laude* (1984). She holds four advanced degrees from Yale University: M.A., M.Phil., J.D., and Ph.D. In her 1991 doctoral dissertation she focused on the theme of the common good. Her prestige education qualifies her to try to make her mark in life in the prestige culture in American culture. Her educational credentials also contribute to her ethos appeal. Having her book published by Harvard University Press is prestigious and contributes to her ethos appeal. Because of the prestige of Princeton, Yale, and Harvard universities in American culture today, perhaps I should explain here that each of these universities has a school of divinity, but it may not be in good odor with certain anti-religion secularists in other university units. In the present review, my pathos appeal involves the frustration and understandable anger that progressives and liberals feel about the obstructionist tactic of anti-60s radical conservatives in the Congress and in the Republican Party, including of course conservative American Catholic cultural warriors. In certain respects this pathos appeal is similar to Kaveny's pathos appeal in her new book. As progressives and liberals may know, in the book *The Theocons: Secular America under Siege* (Doubleday, 2006), Damon Linker delineates how radical conservative American Catholic cultural warriors have conspired in recent decades to bring their anti-abortion religious zealotry and other rash religious views to greater prominence in American culture. In the book *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford University Press, 2006), Philip Jenkins details how the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* was, for rhetorical purposes, subsumed under anti-60s rhetoric to promote radical conservative candidates and issues in the Republican Party. In the book *Render unto Darwin: Philosophical Aspects of the Christian Rights Crusade against Science* (Open Court, 2007, pages 123-148), the American philosophy professor James H. Fetzer uses deontological moral theory (derived from Kant) to construct a cogent argument in favor of legalized abortion in the first trimester. No doubt there were excesses in the 1960s and 1970s, including the excesses involved in the priest-sex-abuse scandal that began to be reported in the press in the 1980s and subsequently. Even so, anti-60s conservatives have thrown out the baby with the bathwater. For understandable reasons, anti-abortion religionists are not popular with anti-religion secularists in the prestige culture in American culture and neither are the conservative American Catholic cultural warriors described by Linker as *theocons*. Now, non-Catholics concerned about Linker's conservative American Catholic cultural warriors should welcome Kaveny's new book. In the political alignments among American Catholics today, Kaveny would separate herself from her fellow American Catholics described by Linker, himself an American Catholic, as *theocons*. Unlike them, Kaveny is not a radical conservative. Indeed, she appears to have been prompted

to undertake her new book, at least in part, by the intra-church disputes among American Catholics. Now, unfortunately, on the world stage today, certain radical jihadists have used violence, including violence against their fellow Muslims, to try to advance their theocratic vision of the world. Fortunately, the American Catholic theologians described by Linker have not used violence to advance their theocratic vision of American culture, but certain other anti-abortion zealots have used violence against abortion providers. Now, in the English-speaking world today, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks in the United Kingdom, who just recently won the Templeton Prize, has addressed the violence of radical jihadists in his deeply informed and accessible book *Not in Gods Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (Schocken Books, 2015). Even though Kaveny understandably does not focus on religious violence, her scholarly new book is related in spirit to Sacks 2015 book inasmuch as both authors address appropriate non-violent ways in which religionists could express what they themselves consider to be their religious views vis a vis the hypothetically secular thought-world. The hypothetically secular thought-world is a conceptual construct that emerged in print culture in the prestige culture in Western culture. In the prestige culture, this hypothetical conceptual construct replaced the medieval hypothetical construct of a religious thought-world expressed not only in Catholicism but also in Islam. In any event, today we have a cultural battle between secularists and religionists in Western culture. In American culture today, religionists decidedly outnumber secularists. However, in the prestige culture in American culture today, the reverse tends to be the case, including a certain number of anti-religion secularists. In theory, secularists could be neutral about religionists, and vice versa. In her scholarly new book, Kaveny appears to be neutral about secularists and the secular thought-world. As we might expect a scholarly book to be, her book tends to rely strongly on her logos appeal. As I have indicated above, explicit expressions of contempt involve the pathos appeal. But she argues explicitly for doing without expressions of contempt. This may sound high-minded. It certainly sounds irenic in spirit. But how practical is it?

ARISTOTLE ON CIVIC RHETORIC Around the time when Athens experimented with limited participatory democracy as a form of government, Aristotle broke with his teacher Platos contempt for rhetoric (in favor of philosophy) by writing his famous treatise on civic rhetoric. Civic rhetoric takes place in the so-called public square, to use Kavenys imagery. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle differentiates three different kinds of civic rhetoric: (1) Deliberative rhetoric used in debate in legislative assemblies about possible proposed courses of action to legislate. (2) Forensic rhetoric used in debate in law courts about charges made against someone to be adjudicated by the court. (3) Epideictic rhetoric about civic values involving good values versus values not deemed to be good (also known as evil). We Americans today still have (1) legislative assemblies in which deliberative rhetoric is used and (2) law courts to adjudicate charges made against someone in which forensic rhetoric is used and (3) public occasions for speeches about civic values in which epideictic rhetoric is used. Aristotle also differentiates three different appeals used by civic orators: (A) The logos appeal (appeals to rational argumentation). (B) The pathos appeal (involving emotional appeals). (C) The ethos appeal (involving credibility). In terms of civic rhetoric in American culture today, most Americans would recognize (A) that rational argumentation may still be detected (Aristotles logos appeal) and (B) that emotional appeals to anger, contempt, or patriotism, for example, may still be detected (Aristotles pathos appeal) and (C) that the speakers (or writers) credibility may still be detected (Aristotles ethos appeal). Simply stated, an orators or an authors ethos appeal involves the persons qualities that positively impress us and compel our attention and interest in whatever she or her has to say. Typically, the persons positive ethos somehow triggers something in us (in our psyches) that enables the person to pass muster as it were with us as trustworthy and thereby enables us to make a positive archetypal projection on to the person. But making such a positive archetypal projection on to a person does not necessarily make us uncritical of the person and what she or he has to say. However, as we might expect, experience often shows that our trust was misplaced, because the person and/or what she says do not turn out to be trustworthy. As a result of such disappointing experiences, we have to mourn our loss involving our misplaced trust in a healthy way. Now, for understandable reasons, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle was not familiar with the ancient Hebrews. Under the leadership of the prophet Moses, the ancient Hebrews had collectively entered into an experiment in a form of government known as the covenant. But the covenant form of government had evolved over the centuries before Amos and certain other prophets articulated the theme known in American culture today as social justice (also known as distributive justice). Rhetoric about social justice is epideictic rhetoric. In the ancient Greek culture out of which Plato and Aristotle emerged, a concept of legal justice emerged for example, in Platos *Republic*. For a philological study of the ancient Greek concept of justice that emerges in Platos *Republic*, see the classicist Eric A. Havelocks book *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato* (Harvard University Press, 1978). In any event, Amos and certain other ancient Hebrew prophets (such as Jeremiah) claimed to be speaking for the monotheistic deity of the Hebrews (also known as God). In this way, the ancient Hebrew prophets established their credibility (Aristotles ethos appeal) for speaking out to their fellow Hebrews. Characteristically, Amos expresses anger, blame, shame, and contempt (Aristotles pathos appeal) as he urges his co-religionists to choose a more elevated path to follow (Aristotles logos appeal). As the example of Amos public oratory to his co-religionists can be described in the terminology that Aristotle uses to describe the basic appeals used in Greek oratory. However, for understandable reasons, we Americans today might invoke the admittedly limited experiment in participatory democracy in ancient Athens. We might also invoke the theme of social justice pioneered by Amos and certain other

ancient Hebrew prophets. But for Amos and the other prophets who pioneered the theme of social justice, social justice was connected with the covenant. Granted, when we Americans today invoke the common good, we are tending implicitly toward something like the ancient Hebrew idea of the covenant. But could a secularist theory of covenant be formulated without reference to God or a specific monotheistic religious tradition? Arguably the spirit of fraternity expressed in connection with the French Revolution expressed something akin to a secular spirit of covenant. Tragically, the French Revolution did not work out as well as the American Revolution nor did the various communist revolutions in Russia and China and elsewhere. Now, in the print culture that emerged historically in Western culture after the Gutenberg printing press emerged in the 1450s, printed materials were added to the mix of civic rhetoric. In American culture historically, the King James Bible (1611) helped more Protestants access the Englished texts of the ancient Hebrew prophets such as Amos. In American culture historically, the American Protestant tradition, including lapsed Protestants, helped launch the tradition of spirited public address that produced what scholars in American studies refer to as the American jeremiad broadly speaking, prophetic speech. For a scholarly study of the American jeremiad, see the Harvard historian Sacvan Bercovitch's book *The American Jeremiad*, 2nd ed. (University of Wisconsin Press, 2012). American jeremiads involve epideictic rhetoric. Typically, all preaching involves epideictic rhetoric about values, but not all preaching involves political values such as the political values involved in public-policy issues. Kaveny also discusses American jeremiads. But both Kaveny and Bercovitch discuss texts written by educated Protestants in print culture 1.0 in American culture. However, in American culture historically, there were also uneducated people, including uneducated folk preachers such as those Bruce A. Rosenberg studies in his book *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* (Oxford University Press, 1970). In the Harvard sociologist David Riesman's lucidly written famous book *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (Yale University Press, 1950), he characterizes uneducated people in American culture as outer-directed (also known as tradition-directed). By contrast, he characterizes educated Americans in print culture 1.0 historically up to 1950 as inner-directed. In addition, he characterizes an emerging number of Americans as other-directed, which he as an inner-directed person in print culture 1.0 in 1950 does not see positively. But the then-emerging other-directed people in American culture were not as characteristically inner-directed as Riesman and others were. Because anti-60s conservatives appear to remember the 1950s with nostalgia, we might suspect that they represent inner-directed people. Conversely, the Americans over against whom anti-60s conservatives stand might represent other-directed people. In any event, I should also point out here that certain nineteenth-century Roman Catholic popes also excelled at constructing jeremiads. For example, a certain papal encyclical is known as the *Syllabus of Errors*. Denouncing supposed errors is consistent with the church's tradition of pronouncing anathemas. But could a secularist construct a secular jeremiad without reference to God or a specific monotheistic religious tradition? Noam Chomsky, a secular Jew, constructs secular jeremiads regularly using certain widely known secular values. As this example of Chomsky shows, the jeremiad tradition appears to be alive and well in American culture today. For an informative scholarly study of Aristotle's theory of the ethos appeal, see the American Jesuit classicist William M. A. Grimaldis essay *The Auditor's Role in Aristotelian Rhetoric* in the book *Oral and Written Communication: Historical Approaches*, edited by Richard Leo Enos (Sage Publications, 1990, pages 65-81).

ONG ON THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND CULTURE

In my estimate, the American Jesuit cultural historian and theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003) constructed the most cogent account of print culture in Western culture, most notably in his book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Harvard University Press, 1958). The *Art of Reason* refers to the Age of Reason (also known as the Enlightenment). Ong sees the *Art of Reason* as irenic in spirit. By contrast, the *Art of Discourse* is systemically agonistic and polemical in structure. In Ong's book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Yale University Press, 1967), the expanded version of his 1964 Terry Lectures at Yale's Divinity School, mentioned above, Ong discusses polemical structures at length (pages 192-286). In Ong's book *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* (Cornell University Press, 1981), the published version of his 1979 Messenger Lectures at Cornell University, Ong further develops his account of polemical structures. Ong discussed his 1981 book in a plenary address to the American Catholic Philosophical Association. See the *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, volume 56, edited by Daniel O. Dahlstrom, Desmond J. Fitzgerald, and John T. Noonan, Jr. (American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1982, pages 109-124). Briefly stated, Ong sees polemical structures as integrally involved in the evolution of consciousness and culture. Over the years, Ong made his mark in the prestige culture by publishing eight books with prestigious university presses: two with Harvard University Press (1958a, 1958b), two with Yale University Press (1967 and 1982), three with Cornell University Press (1971, 1977, and 1981), and one with the University of Toronto Press (1986). Drawing on Ong's body of work about consciousness and culture, I want to construct an account of our American culture and certain culture wars over roughly the last half century or so, highlighting certain events impacting American Catholics to contextualize Kaveny's new book. Anit-60s conservative to the contrary notwithstanding, I want to suggest that our collective American consciousness has evolved over roughly the last half century or so. As a result of our collective evolution of consciousness, the time is ripe for the evolution of our American culture. Ong himself describes his thought as phenomenological and personalist in cast. However, as rich as

Ongs body of work is, he does not discuss political theory in the kind of detail that Kaveny does. Arguably Ongs theme of dialogue could be connected with the German philosophy professor Jurgen Habermas discourse ethics, as could Kavenys theme of religious discourse in the public square. Now, I would point out that Kaveny does not happen to advert to Ongs wonderful essay Voice and the Opening of Closed Systems in his book Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture (Cornell University Press, 1977, pages 305-341). But what Kaveny refers to as prophecy involves the voice of the prophet articulating and expressing in verbal speech (spoke and/or written) something prophetic. (Perhaps I should point out here that there are biblical accounts of prophecies enacted through body language pantomime -- without spoken words.) I interpret Kavenys words without contempt to mean prophecy expressed in an irenic way. Irenic expressions would probably involve what Ong, using systems terminology, refers to as open closure. Therefore, from my standpoint as a student of Ongs thought, Kaveny could have used Ongs thought about open closure to help advance her basic argument. In addition, she could have used his thought about consciousness and culture to advance her basic argument. But Ongs body of work still remains as an under-utilized resource. In the present review I have been dwelling on the ethos appeal, which involves the personal credibility of the speaker/orator and by extension, of the author. The authors written words symbolize the sound of his or her voice. The written words, and of course the printed words, come to take on a certain credibility associated with the ethos appeal. Without mentioning the ethos appeal, Ong in effect discusses the psychodynamics involved in the ethos appeal of written and printed words in his thought-provoking essay Maranatha: Death and Life in the Text of the Book in his 1977 book, mentioned above, Interfaces of the Word (pages 230-271). Also see Ongs fantastic essay Technological Development and Writer-Subject-Reader Immediacies in Enos 1990 book Oral and Written Communication: Historical Approaches, mentioned above (pages 206-215). But the kind of technologically enabled experiences of immediacies that Ong discusses also occur today not only when we allow newspapers to enter our homes but also when we allow radio and television broadcasts, and email messages and Internet sources to enter our homes. As a matter of fact, thanks to our evolving communications technologies, we Americans today may experience technologically enabled immediacies daily, some of which are more evocative than others. Now, through the psychodynamics involved in the ethos appeal, we readers may commune with the authors spirit expressed in the written and printed text, thereby making our reading of the text a more genuinely personal communing with the author who may not be physically present to us or who may be deceased. At times, such deep communing with the author of a text may involve I-thou communication. In Ongs mature work in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, he characteristically expresses himself in an irenic spirit not in the polemical spirit of the jeremiad tradition. Moreover, the only pathos appeal Ong uses is his own infectious enthusiasm. As to his ethos appeal, Ong represented himself as polymath with a philosophical mind who was an orthodox Roman Catholic priest. To this day, he is the only Catholic priest ever elected to be the president of the Modern Language Association of America (in 1978). In return for his irenic efforts to persuade people, Ong received a respectful hearing from many contemporary scholars, but only a few people understood his thought well enough to develop his thesis about consciousness and culture further on their own. No doubt Ong is a tough act to follow. I see him as towering philosophical giants. In my own admittedly modest publications (modest in number and substance), I have pioneered the field of Ong studies. In my publications in the field of Ong studies, I see myself as standing on the shoulders of a giant. But I am not myself an intellectual giant. Indeed, by the standard expectations of the prestige culture in American culture today, my academic and scholarly achievements are undoubtedly modest both in number and substance. But in my publications and in the present review, my ethos appeal is based on my expert knowledge of Ongs thought and related thought. In my book about his work (2000; rev. ed., 2015), I have surveyed eleven of Ongs books (1957, 1958, 1962, 1967a, 1967b, 1971, 1977, 1981, 1982, and 1986). In addition, I have co-edited five collections of Ongs essays (1992a, 1992b, 1995, 1999, and 2002) and provided introductory essays in four of those five volumes (1992a, 1995, 1999, and 2002). In addition, I have also contributed essays to four collections of essays by diverse hands about Ongs thought (1987, 1991, 1999, and 2012) and published numerous articles in professional journals centered on Ongs thought. Nevertheless, with or without my help, I do not expect Ongs thought to become contagious in academia or elsewhere in the near future. On the contrary, I expect that his thought will continue to be over the heads of many academics and other college-educated people who in turn will see me as simply an Ong enthusiast and wonder why Im so enthusiastic about his thought. In any event, in the spring semester of 1964, Ong delivered the prestigious Terry Lectures at Yales School of Divinity, the expanded version of which was published as the book The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History (Yale University Press, 1967). According to Ong, by 1960, communication media that accentuate sound has reached a certain critical mass. At times, he refers to them collectively as producing secondarily oral culture. For Ong, primarily oral culture goes back to pre-historic and pre-literate cultures, even though it persisted for centuries after the phonetic alphabet emerged. However, he eventually switched from referring to primarily oral culture and started referring instead to primary oral culture in short, oral culture 1.0. Similarly, he also switched from referring to secondarily oral culture and started referring instead to secondary oral culture in short, oral culture 2.0. It appears to me that oral culture 2.0 is here to stay. Thus far over the last half century or so, oral culture 2.0 has transformed print culture 1.0 that Ong writes about in his 1958 book, into print culture 2.0. Print culture 2.0 still includes certain key

infrastructures that Ong identifies as characteristic of print culture 1.0. But print culture is characteristically more open, thanks in large measure to the influence of oral culture 2.0. To this day, we are still living under the deep influence of oral culture 2.0. In Riesmans terminology, mentioned above, outer-directed people (also known as tradition-directed) basically represent oral culture 1.0, inner-directed people represent print culture 1.0, and other-directed people represent both oral culture 2.0 and print culture 2.0. CONCLUSION It appears to me that both oral culture 2.0 and print culture 2.0 are here to stay in our contemporary American culture. In Riesmans terminology, other-directed people are probably more deeply attuned to oral culture 2.0 and print culture 2.0. But anti-60s conservatives appear to be attuned to the inner-directedness characteristic of certain people in print culture 1.0. However, anti-60s conservatives also tend to be attuned to the polemical structures that Ong sees as characteristic of oral culture 1.0 and so do the other-directed Americans over against whom the anti-60s conservatives stand. If my observations are basically correct, then we Americans are probably going to experience culture wars for years to come. At the end of the American Civil War (1862-1865), the victorious President Abraham Lincoln famously spoke in his Second Inaugural Address, which Kaveny quotes, of having malice toward none. No doubt that is a noble sentiment for the victor in war to express. But it isn't exactly clear to me at least that our contemporary culture wars involving the 1960s and 1970s have yet resulted in a clear-cut victory for either side. For this reason, it strikes me as premature for Kaveny to invoke President Lincoln's words at the present time. No doubt progressives and liberals would welcome the surrender of the anti-abortion zealots on legalized abortion in the first trimester. Figuratively speaking, their surrender could be likened to General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox. But the anti-abortion zealots do not appear to me to be ready to surrender just yet. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A creative and illuminating of a challenging subject: how ... By mark A creative and illuminating of a challenging subject: how religion informs public advocacy, making itself relevant without claiming a privileged perch. Kaveny's historical analysis is helpful, making the point that in an increasingly pluralistic world the "chemotherapy" of prophecy needs to be wielded with humility and grace if it expects to be effective.

American culture warriors have plenty to argue about, but battles over such issues as abortion and torture have as much to do with rhetorical style as moral substance. Cathleen Kaveny reframes the debate about religion in the public square by focusing on a powerful stream of religious discourse in American political speech: the Biblical rhetoric of prophetic indictment. Throughout American history, reformers of all political persuasions and for all manner of causes—abolitionists, defenders of slavery, prohibitionists, and civil rights leaders—have echoed the thundering condemnations of the Hebrew prophets in decrying what they see as social evils. Rooted in the denunciations of Puritan sermons, prophetic rhetoric has evolved to match the politics of an increasingly pluralistic society. To employ prophetic indictment in political speech is to claim to speak from a position of unassailable authority—whether God, reason, or common sense—in order to accuse opponents of violating a fundamental law. The fiery rhetoric of prophetic indictment operates very differently from the cooler language of practical deliberation and policy analysis. Kaveny contends that prophetic indictment is a form of moral chemotherapy: it can be strong medicine against moral cancers threatening the body politic, but administered injudiciously, it can do more harm than good. Kaveny draws upon a wide array of sources to develop criteria for the constructive use of prophetic indictment. In modern times, Martin Luther King Jr. exemplifies the use of prophetic rhetoric to facilitate reform and reconciliation rather than revenge.

A monumental achievement, and a much-needed addition to the academic and societal conversation about the role of religion in public life. In precise prose and with careful analysis, Kaveny challenges some of the leading theorists about public discourse and puts forward her own theories, all accompanied by a storyteller's gift for anecdote and a philosopher's talent for explication. (Michael Sean Winters National Catholic Reporter 2016-04-20) What a welcome book! Kaveny shows us a reality hidden in plain sight, the rhetorical form of the jeremiad, which is crucial for understanding how and why political discourse has become so sour and polarized. Her wonderfully fresh and important approach deserves to be pondered by all who hope to understand the public square today. (John O'Malley, Georgetown University) Through solid historical insights and careful moral reasoning, Kaveny gives her readers something that has become increasingly rare: a strong religious voice that points not to a shouted dialogue of the deaf, but to integrity, community, healing, and ways of getting along. It is an important book for the times. (Mark Noll, University of Notre Dame) Cathleen Kaveny has given us a book that brings us closer to both the rhetoric and the reality of American politics. In our history, commitment is not incompatible with civility, and Prophecy without Contempt shows how we might recover that possibility for the future. (Robin Lovin, Southern Methodist University) Kaveny's project in Prophecy without Contempt is important and path-breaking. The place of religious discourse in the American public square has received much attention for many years, but the role of prophetic indictment has been largely overlooked. Kaveny's book not only opens a new front in these debates, but starts the conversation with a rich analysis of the history and function of prophetic discourse and a carefully developed normative framework to guide its use. The interdisciplinary work that informs Kaveny's book is especially impressive. As an ethicist and legal academic, Kaveny draws on resources from these disciplines, and she also integrates

sophisticated analyses of American history, biblical scholarship, and literary criticism. (Kathleen A. Brady Commonweal 2016-05-10)[An] original account of public speech in Americas past, present, and possible futureThe timely genius of *Prophecy Without Contempt* lies in its examination of the rhetoric of contemporary moral and political debates in light of this tradition of the American jeremiad, which she sees running through the American Revolution and Civil War into the present. Although Kaveny deliberately ends her study with the presidential election of 2004, when speeches were pitched to attract the moral voter, she offers an essential perspective on the 2016 primaries. (William Storrar Commonweal 2016-06-16)Inspiring[Kaveny] suggests that religions most powerful public role involves prophetic indictment of our shortcomings. Martin Luther King Jr. is one model of this, Abraham Lincoln another. She insists that the most powerful prophets are tempered by a lively sense of humility. They understand both the limits of their knowledge and their own moral shortcomings. They also have social humility regarding the status of other peoples, including ones enemies, in Gods affections. In other words, they dont consign their foes to hell. (E. J. Dionne, Jr. Washington Post 2016-08-24)This is a well-imagined, highly detailed, multidisciplinary, compelling, and clearly written analysis of the history (from biblical, to American Puritan, to contemporary U.S.) of the conceptual roots, religious and cultural nature, and contributions to civil (or uncivil) political discourse of the American Jeremiad or prophetic indictment. (L. S. Hulett Choice 2016-11-01)About the AuthorCathleen Kaveny is Darald and Juliet Libby Professor of Law and Theology at Boston College.