FALL 2023

AD FONTES

A JOURNAL OF PROTESTANT LETTERS

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About

***AD FONTES* IS A QUARTERLY JOURNAL PUBLISHED BY THE DAVENANT INSTITUTE.**

Ad fontes, "to the sources," was a rallying cry of the Reformation. The Reformers bequeathed to us a heritage, rooted in the Scriptures and their wide-ranging humanistic studies, which sought to address the hard questions of theology, philosophy, and culture in a way that was true to the revelation of God's word and God's world. *Ad Fontes* channels this ethos into a modern context, seeking to explore our questions alongside the great cloud of witnesses and the many exemplars who have gone before us.

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From the Editor's Desk

Sometimes life is complicated. And sometimes it isn't. Part of true wisdom is, surely, learning to know when a situation is one or the other. In an age dominated by tribalism, confirmation bias, and misinformation, those who would be wise are often called upon to step back, refusing to be drawn until they have taken good counsel. Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, as Solomon tells us. Yet we also live in a time in which grave evils are excused under the sleight of hand of being "nuanced", in which we are compelled to postpone judgment indefinitely lest we speak before the voice of some hitherto unheard of supposedly oppressed group (or even just an individual) has a chance to be heard. Those who would be wise are then called upon to call a spade a spade. This is not something Solomon told us, but it is perhaps the kind of thing he might have said.

An essential element of working out when things are or are not actually complicated is to go back to the sources–*ad fontes*. So often, when one consults the greatest thinkers on some weighty matter, one finds that, to one's surprise, they are either circumspect where our contemporaries claim to be absolutely certain, or startlingly clear where our contemporaries love to dither. Or, when one actually closely examines historical events, one finds startling complexity where one anticipated uniformity, or remarkable consistency where one expected variety. A thread running through the essays in this Fall 2023 issue of *Ad Fontes* is that our authors have all gone back to the sources, all looked at the facts, and found such surprises.

Miles Smith, expanding content from his *Ad Fontes* blog, has written a detailed study of Protestant faith on the American frontier. I wonder what you imagine religion on the frontier to have been like–probably some kind of rough and ready, individualistic cowboy religion across the board. Miles' study, however, tells us otherwise. Paul Julienne, meanwhile, considers the perennial clash between science and religion–something which many simplistically imagine to be an interminable stalemate between faith and reason. A highly accomplished physicist, Paul leapfrogs the stalemate entirely, and finds in Thomas Aquinas an answer to the question that must precede any such debate: how can we know anything in the first place? Randall Price then delivers a fine-grained study of the status of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* in the Church of England up to 1662. The Anglican Communion's current disarray is no small part related to the fact that many argue for a

flexible understanding of how authoritative the *Articles* have been throughout Anglican history; Randall's study, however, makes short work of such obfuscation. In our final essay, Stephen Schuler examines the frustrating faith of W.H. Auden–undeniably a Christian poet in some sense, and with a life full of overlooked religious nuances, yet who was ultimately gripped by vices which cannot be paired with Christian orthodoxy.

Our reviews section, meanwhile, pulls together a slew of highly interesting recent books worthy of our readers' attention. Jane Scharl reviews a fascinating work of historic retrieval: *Staging Luther*, a new edition of three Reformation plays by the pro-Luther playwright Hans Sachs. As well as reviewing the work itself, Jane (herself now accomplished Reformation-themed playwright with her recently staged production of the Calvin-Ignatius-Rabelais spectacle *Sonnez les Matines*) meditates on the nature of polemical art in general. Brian J. Auten reviews a curious new entry in the developing cottage industry of "White Christian Nationalism Studies" which purports to expose the relationship between such ideas and J. Edgar Hoover. Finally, Richard Rankin Russell reviews an academic study of James Joyce through the lens of Christian heresy. Joyce is, of course, not everyone's cup of tea, yet he is a blend with which we should all be familiar, and Richard introduces readers to how one of modernism's most influential novelists has been increasingly understood as a religious thinker.

Throughout, for the good of your soul, my friend and colleague Colin Redemer, our Poetry Editor, has assembled another fine selection of poetry, with entries from Casey Spinks and Tolu Ogunlesi

Christians know that Lady Wisdom's voice cries out in the street. Sometimes, it is a stark and simple shout, to snatch you from the clutches of Lady Folly at a moment's notice. At other times, it is a call to tread slowly and carefully in order to avoid the sly and subtle paths of her house which lead down to destruction. As with knowing when to answer a fool according to his folly and when not to, true wisdom often lies in discerning between the two. Our hope and prayer for *Ad Fontes* is that all that we publish will enable our readers to hear that call and to tread that path safely in the days of their earthly pilgrimage, until we come at last to Wisdom himself.

Rhys Laverty
Senior Editor
October 2023

ESSAYS

No Cowboy Religion: Remapping Protestantism on the American Frontier

MILES SMITH

In the 1830s Lyman Beecher looked west and worried. The great American frontier–at that time pretty much all of North America west of the Appalachians–remained largely untouched by the firm Congregationalist Calvinism which Beecher saw as necessary for civilization, morality, and the salvation of the human soul. Beecher came from proud old Connecticut stock, but was willing to make some religious compromises to win the west. In 1801 the Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches in northern states created the Plan of Union, whereby any New England Congregationalist who went west of the Hudson River to do missionary work gained near automatic membership in the Presbyterian church.

Beecher (1775-1863) and other missionaries went west, and founded Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, ostensibly to keep Roman Catholics from winning the territory. While anti-Catholic and nativist aspects of missionary work have been duly noted by historians, Beecher and other Early Republic Protestants had other reasons for wanting to ensure a firm religious governing hand in frontier locales. Instead of celebrating democratic and enthusiastic frontier religiosity as a normative expression of a particularly American Christianity, Beecher, Episcopal Bishop Philander Chase (1775-1852), and others saw the frontier as a pernicious and irreligious geography that needed control and regulation. For Early Republic Protestants, the frontier was not a place to be celebrated or idealized; it was a potential danger that needed to be controlled, colonized, and eventually stripped of what made it a frontier in the first place.[1]

AN IRRELIGIOUS FRONTIER?

What was religion like on the American frontier? Visions of *There Will Be Blood*-style fire and brimstone preachers in the movies leap to mind. Any sincere faith, we imagine, was likely as individualistic and rugged as the cowboys we so fondly imagine populating the landscape. Such a vision is, in fact, not all that far from the prevailing scholarship on the question. In a 1993 symposium on the great theorist Frederick Jackson

1. Mary Jane Farrelly, *Anti-Catholicism in America, 1620-1860* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 179.

FEAR, NOT CELEBRATION, DROVE EASTERN PROTESTANTS TO ESTABLISH HOME MISSIONS AND PROTESTANT COLLEGES IN THE MIDWEST.

Turner's (1861-1932) frontier thesis,[2] historian John Boles proposed that Turner "had little to say about religion, on the frontier or elsewhere." Boles observed that Turner was not religious himself and had no interest in theology. The supposedly sparse treatment of religion in Turner's 1921 opus, *The Frontier in American History*, was hardly surprising to his contemporaries or subsequent readers. Turner's essential claim regarding religion and the frontier was that any effect organized religion had on the frontier was dwarfed by the effect of democracy: "Democracy became almost the religion of the pioneer. He held with passionate devotion the idea that he was building under freedom a new society, based on self government, and for the welfare of the average man." Democracy, according to Turner, formed the basis for frontier civilization. Correspondingly, the idealized American pioneer, as a preacher of "the gospel of democracy," feared that institutions that abrogated the individual spirit that actuated frontier democracy would destroy the civilization of America. In Turner's rendering, American civilization *was* the frontier, and whichever religion hewed most closely to frontier ideology was most representatively American.[3]

RELIGION GOES WEST

Turner, however, did write on religion, albeit only in the shadow of democracy. If democracy was the true religion of the frontier, then whatever traditional religion existed among white settlers on the American frontier would become reflexively democratic. Frontier religion and democracy existed symbiotically in Turnerian thought. Turner defined the frontier as the "outer edge" of the wave of white settlement, "the meeting point between savagery and civilization." The United States–and therefore the religion of the United States–was most distinctly American within this ambiguous syncretism of civilization and barbarism. The East—essentially the parts of the American republic along the Atlantic that held on to some Old World civilizational customs—was, in Turner's account, the great obstacle to frontier Americanism. Eastern clerics and intellectuals wanted to control the frontier, and impose Old World–and therefore less American–frameworks on it.[4]

Turner names Lyman Beecher as just one of the men leading "the most effective efforts of the East to regulate the frontier…through its educational and religious activity." Beecher and other Protestants, argued Turner, exerted Eastern influence through "interstate migration and by organized societies." Eastern Protestants "appealed to the conscience of New England," with Beecher making "appeals to her fears lest other religious sects anticipate her own. The New England preacher and school-teacher left their mark on the West." Protestant divines like Beecher felt a "dread of Western emancipation from New England's political and economic control" which Turner believed was "paralleled by her fears lest the West cut loose from her religion." A missionary magazine in 1850 commented on settlement in Wisconsin and noted a distinct ambiguity regarding the morality of white frontier settlement. The magazine editors "scarcely know whether to rejoice or mourn over this extension of our settlements." Although they sympathized with "whatever tends to increase the physical resources and prosperity of our country," these Easterners could not forget "that with all these dispersions into remote and still remoter corners of the land the supply of the means of grace is

2. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) penned his famous essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Turner posited that the subdual of the American frontier had a profound effect upon the American character in its attitudes towards democracy, violence, exceptionalism, opportunity, and more. It has become, one way or another, one of the foundational ideas of American historical discussion.

3. John B. Boles, "Turner, the Frontier, and the Study of Religion in America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 13, no. 2 (1993): 205–16.

4. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American" (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1894), 1-4; Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1921), 36.

becoming relatively less and less." Fear, not celebration, drove Eastern Protestants to establish home missions and Protestant colleges in the Midwest such as Kenyon, Hillsdale, Oberlin, and others. "As seaboard cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore strove for the mastery of Western trade, so the various denominations strove for the possession of the West." And so Turner's story set up a paradigm by which less institutional, more democratic, and less traditional evangelical Protestantism came to be seen as American, while Protestant religiosity that smacked of tradition, institutionalism, the metropolitan East, or the Old World, was by inference less American. [5]

COMPETING NARRATIVES OF FRONTIER CHRISTIANITY

Historians since the 1920s have offered varying interpretations of frontier religion. Peter G. Mode's *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity* proposed that Christianity in the United States was highly fluid precisely because it was so wedded to the social changes of the American frontier. "The spirit of the frontier," Mode argued, "was to imprint itself upon the type of religious life imported into its borders by the herculean missionary effort of the East. True to its developmental genius, the Christianity of the frontier" gradually took on "the characteristics of its new environment." As the frontier stage of American civilization passed, American Christianity found itself "vastly changed from what it was before our fathers began to move toward the West. And the changes effected in it during the period are what today give distinguishing characteristics to American religious life."[6]

If Mode saw the frontier change religion, William Warren Sweet (1881-1959) argued that such change was not one-way: religion changed, but did so in order to influence certain locales. Churches, Sweet noted, became islands of community in regions where basic civilizational hallmarks were still few and far between. According to Boles, Sweet "emphasized how religion adapted to the frontier situation, producing a peculiar form of Christianity; unlike Mode, however, Sweet went on to suggest how religion in turn influenced the frontier."

Evangelical historians have often played on the fluid non-institutional nature of so-called American evangelicalism–and this remains true in their discussion of frontier religion. Mark Noll has proposed that "evolution of the new nation's political thought almost necessarily entailed a corresponding evolution of the theological reasoning with which that thought had become so closely entwined." Directions "in which political conceptions moved defined also the direction of theological change." During the Early National era (c.1780-1860), "that evolution was away from a republicanism largely defined by civic humanism, with ideals of disinterested public virtue and freedom defined as liberation from tyranny." Noll posited that the movement in political thought was "towards republicanism aligned with liberalism, with ideals of individualized private virtue and freedom defined as self-determination." The republican liberalism combined with other intellectual resources allowed Protestant evangelicals to "spread the gospel, stabilize the nation, and subdue the frontier."[7]

AGAINST COWBOY RELIGION

Noll's proposition identified important aspects of the relationship between the frontier and religion. Unlike Turner, Mode, or Sweet, Noll rightly observed that evangelicals *did* subdue the frontier. There seems to be evidence, however, that the evangelical Christianity that subdued the frontier was neither as liberal, nor as individualistic, as Noll and other historians have traditionally assumed–or as our instinctive image of a lonesome "cowboy religion" may suggest. Robert Elder's *The Sacred Mirror* helpfully argues that southern evangelicals in the Early Republic were not meaningfully individualistic or divorced from older types of communitarian social boundaries and penalties. More importantly, if the definition of "evangelical" is broadened to reflect the term's historical inclusion of Episcopalians, Lutherans, and openly anti-revivalist

5. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American," 1-4; Turner, *The Frontier in American History* , 36.

6. Peter G. Mode, *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 14.*

7. Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 210.

Presbyterians, the halting and uneven subjugation of the frontier seems to have been done through religious institutions that were at best ambivalent about democracy, liberalism, and individualism.[8]

Most American Protestants saw the near miraculous population growth on the frontier in the early nineteenth century as an indication of God's providential blessing. Yet they also feared the frontier being left to its own devices. Even supposedly frontier-friendly Protestants—Baptists and Methodists—supposed that frontier Americans needed the steadying hand of religion to keep themselves from slipping into money-grabbing, amoral anarchy. Few if any settlers, save a few New England Congregationalists and Virginia Episcopalians, participated in any meaningful religious culture or society. The American frontier, far from being a bedrock of Christianity, was a socio-moral *terra incognita*. When Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury (1745-1816) traveled to Tennessee in 1797, he figured that "not one in a hundred" Tennessee frontiersmen "came here to get religion." They came instead "to get plenty of good land."[9] Frontier behaviors horrified travelers from the East. Sunday worship, even in locales that had a church, was generally disregarded, and settler irreligiosity meant that easterners were "shocked at the balls, the drinking," and "the utter disregard paid to the sabbath day" in frontier communities. "Pious men were terrified at the drunkenness, the vice, the gambling, the brutal fights, the gouging, the needless duels they beheld on every hand." White boatmen in Kentucky "had become more dreaded than the Indians."[10] Presbyterian ministers in Tennessee and Kentucky at the turn of the nineteenth century complained that most of their fellow ministers and potential congregants "were bad men" and that "drunkenness, wrangling, licentiousness, and heresy brought most of them to grief sooner or later."[11] Asbury's Methodists and a few enterprising Presbyterians certainly worked more aggressively among frontier populations, but that did not mean total conformity to or acceptance of frontier civilizational norms. Asbury actually worried that "some or many" white settlers would "eventually lose their souls" in their new frontier homes. Asbury in particular worried about the democratic tendencies of frontiersmen and their potential religious formation. Asbury followed his forerunner John Wesley (1703-1791) and held tightly to anti-democratic politics in both the ecclesiastic and civil realms. Asbury practiced what one historian called "ecclesiastical paternalism" in the hope of eradicating any tendency towards democracy in American Methodism.[12]

MOST AMERICAN PROTESTANTS SAW THE NEAR MIRACULOUS POPULATION GROWTH ON THE FRONTIER IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY AS AN INDICATION OF GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL BLESSING. YET THEY ALSO FEARED THE FRONTIER BEING LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVICES.

Even more than Methodists, Episcopalians along the Atlantic seaboard, from Boston to Charleston, saw controlling frontier religion as an absolute necessity for the future of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in the United States. George Washington Doane (1799-1859), the Episcopal bishop of New Jersey, believed that the region was destined to be socially benighted no matter how much material progress was made along the frontier. He and other bishops consecrated Jackson Kemper as missionary bishop to the states of Indiana and Illinois in the 1830s, precisely because the frontier needed to conform religiously to more traditional forms of

8. George R. Fairbanks, *History of the University of the South, at Sewanee, Tennessee* (Jacksonville, FL: H. & W.B. Drew Co., 1905), 1.

9. Merrill E. Gaddis, "Religious Ideas and Attitudes in the Early Frontier." *Church History* 2, no. 3 (1933): 152–70; Francis, *Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church* Vol. II (New York: N. Bangs, and T. Mason, 1821), 286.

10. John Bach McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States, From the Revolution to the Civil War* Vol. II (New York and London: D. Appleton and Co., 1914), 577-78.

11. B.W. McDonnold, *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church* (Nashville, TN: Board of Publication of Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888), 7.

12. Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury,* 286; John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4

Protestantism. The rise of frontier revivalism and the presence of Roman Catholic missionaries worried Doane and other Episcopalians, who saw frontier Roman Catholicism and revivalism as twin recipes for civilizational anarchy or tyranny: "Through the regions of our own unbounded West see how the stream of life sets onward. Behold, in arts, in wealth, in power, a progress such as earth has never seen, outrunning even fancy's wildest dreams." The settlement of the West, Doane warned, was proceeding without "provision that at all keeps pace with it, for the securing of man's nobler and immortal interests." The American West was populating, but Protestant churches were not keeping pace. He lamented the "keen and shrewd regard [with which] the Church of Rome has marked that region for her own, and with what steadiness of purpose she pursues her aim; and seeks to lay the deep foundations of a power which is to grow as it grows, and to strengthen as it gathers strength."[13]

For Doane, Anglicanism represented the best chance of making the American frontier civilized and Protestant. It also represented the best chance of fending off heterodox frontier revivalism. He argued that "The Church of England, long by God's protecting favour, the stay and hope of Christendom, now needs her utmost succours for her own defence against the impious combination that attempts her overthrow." This impious combination consisted of Revivalists and Roman Catholics. "The Christian brethren, not of our communion, who have seemed to grow and multiply about us with a vigour so prolific…[had begun to feel and own] the want of those inherent principles of union which alone can bind in one large masses of mankind." Revivalist sects were "destitute of ancient landmarks," which made them "stray insensibly from 'the old paths,' in which alone God's promise gives assurance of protection and of peace." Believers who passed through revivalist churches "turn instinctively to us. They recognize the doctrines which we hold, as the old faith which once was given to the Saints." Doane's sermon exemplified the Episcopal Church's self-perception as the only Protestant body capable of securing historic Christian doctrine and practice on the frontier, and the only body capable of keeping the Roman Catholic Church from securing a foothold for ecclesiastical expansion on the Early Republic's northwestern frontier.[14]

Episcopalians remained circumspect about frontier evangelical religiosity in the South as well. The less-institutional nature of frontier religion did not, they noted, create the type of educational milieu that educated young Episcopalians in their faith. Revivalist frontier colleges—typically founded by Baptists, Methodist, or the Disciples of Christ—were seen as insufficient. When Episcopalians passed "from under the parental eye" in preparatory schools they did not have any "institution fairly within our reach" where confirmed Episcopalians could be "kept under the influence of those Christian principles" and churchly instruction "to which we pledged them in baptism, which we have accepted and hold as of the essence of Christ's religion, which we would transmit in their vigor to them and through them, unmarred, to our latest posterity." Frontier education and frontier colleges were not appropriate for the small but growing number of Episcopalians in southern states only a generation removed from being untamed wilds. Bishop James Hervey Otey (1800-1863) in particular believed that the evangelical South had not created a true religious society or churchly religious practice. Bishop William Mercer Green (1798-1887) noted that Otey "saw that religious culture was the great want of the people of the South-West." Otey was convinced that knowledge "of the Church in its Catechisms and Creeds, and its life-giving sacraments, should be taught side by side with the usual branches of both an elementary and a higher education." It was Otey who first called "the attention of our South-Western Churchmen to the necessity of establishing such a University as this." And such a university did, indeed, come to be: the University of the

13. Kenny A. Franks, "Missionaries In The West: An Expedition Of The Protestant Episcopal Church In 1844." *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 44, no. 3 (1975): 318–33; George Washington Doane, *The Missionary Bishop: The Sermon at the Consecration of the Right Reverend Jackson Kemper D.D.* (Burlington, NJ: J.L. Powell, 1835), 12-14.

14. Doane, *The Missionary Bishop,* 12-14; E. Clowes Chorley, "The Missionary March of the Episcopal Church." *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 17, no. 1 (1948): 3–43.

South (familiarly known as Sewanee) was founded in 1857.[15]

The efforts of Green and Otey in founding the Sewanee represent an opportunity to rethink scholarship that over-privileges democratization and liberalization as hallmarks of Protestant education in the Early Republic. Sewanee was not illiberal, but it was fundamentally traditional in a time and place where Nathan Hatch argued culture, religious culture included, mounted a frontal assault on tradition, mediating elites, and institutions. Something similar may be said of the founding of Southern Seminary in 1859, the flagship Southern Baptist institution. At this time, Baptist clerics in frontier locales such as Texas, Arkansas, and parts of Northern Louisiana, often sought fast ordination for pastors in order to staff rapidly growing Baptist churches in the Southwest. Many, therefore, balked at the idea of a denominational seminary imposing centralized standards on local churches. However, college founder James Petigru Boyce (1827-1888) made clear his commitment to academic and intellectual excellence, refusing to allow Southern Baptist adoption of any rhetoric downplaying education and theological acumen. Boyce studied at Brown, and then at Princeton Seminary under Charles Hodge, and imported the same academic standards to Southern. Against his critics, he asserted that "Baptists are unmistakably the friends of education, and the advocates of an Educated Ministry." Frontier church or no, Baptist pastors needed an education.[16]

Civilization and education forced on the West by Protestants did in fact subdue the frontier and ultimately remade it in the image of not only the eastern states, but of the Old World. Philip Schaff (1819-1893) toured the United States in the 1850s and opined that "the further west, and the newer the country, the more unformed and changeable is the state of society." "On the frontiers, and in uncultivated regions, the rudest state of nature sometimes appears." Schaff announced that even in gold-rich California, "I would not live for any price." Frontier society in the United States was still too given too much to "chaotic confusion" to be meaningfully civilized, and law and order was a tenuous proposition at best in places where lynch law ruled more convincingly than government.

German immigration mitigated Schaff's fears about the American frontier somewhat. If Germans shed their particularities and "if only his virtues, his depth of mind and of heart" remained, they could be "enriched and quickened with the undeniable energy and practical turn of the Anglo-American." Germans and Anglos, Schaff delightedly told a Berlin audience, mixed "much easier than other nations" and were "both, in fact, essentially Germanic or Teutonic. The shared "simplicity and honesty of character" in Germans—now German Americans—and Anglo Americans boded well for the frontier geographies where they mixed. These mixed Anglo and German communities were not given to violence in the same way other frontier localities were because they had a "deep-rooted respect for woman, love for home and the family life, especially moral earnestness and a religious turn." Even the ecclesiastical life of Germans inevitably helped make them civilized. Germans and Anglos were the two populations who supported "ideas and institutions of evangelical Christianity." Together they held "in their hands the theoretical and practical mission of Protestantism for the world." Anglos and Germans had a duty "where they are brought by Providence into immediate contact, and meet in all the relations of social life," to refuse "to hate and fight one another."[17]

Schaff's vision of Anglo-German—and religiously Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed—civilization subduing the wilds of North America was hardly utopian. Demographically stable communities in the Upper Midwest and the West revolved around Lutheran settlement and Anglican missions. The founding of Nashotah House in 1840s Wisconsin led to one of the

15. George R. Fairbanks, *History of the University of the South, at Sewanee, Tennessee* (Jacksonville, FL: H. & W.B. Drew Co., 1905), 1, 12-13.

16. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1989), 182; James Petigru Boyce, *Three Changes in Theological Institutions, An Inaugural Address Delivered Before the Board of Trustees of the Furman University* (Greenville, SC: CJ. Elford), 5.

17. Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of the Political, Social, and Religious Character of the United States, In Two Lectures* (New York: C. Scribner, 1855), 35.

first major efforts among Protestants to provide material progress to an otherwise still rudimentary society in Wisconsin. Bishop Jackson Kemper (1789-1870) hauled books, bells, bedroom linens, kitchen appliances, and a host of other household items to Nashotah. The Episcopalians nurtured good relationships with local Lutheran emigrants at Pine Lake, Wisconsin. Nashotah—like other frontier settlements—was largely populated by young men; but the fact that it did not have the levels of violence present in the frontier South and Southwest is ample evidence that high levels of religiosity mapped neatly onto more stable communities.[18]

> **CIVILIZATION AND EDUCATION FORCED ON THE WEST BY PROTESTANTS DID IN FACT SUBDUE THE FRONTIER AND ULTIMATELY REMADE IT IN THE IMAGE OF NOT ONLY THE EASTERN STATES, BUT OF THE OLD WORLD.**

By the 1840s, even the leaders of revivalist sects rethought the democratization they unintendedly brought about in American frontier religion. Barton Stone (1772-1844), a former Presbyterian who helped lead the revivals of the 1820s which constituted an important part of the so-called Second Great Awakening, grew disillusioned with the political realities of the regions infiltrated by his own revivalist enterprises. At the end of his life he downplayed his participation in the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801, the event that is generally credited with instigating the Second Great Awakening. Stone's hatred of slavery and his belief that the frontier had slipped back into godlessness and lawlessness convinced him that his attempt to return Christianity to primitive purity had been co-opted by a form of religious Americanism that upheld frontier lawlessness and immorality even as it borrowed some forms of institutionalized Christianity.[19]

In 1843, John Williamson Nevin (1803-1886) published his *The Anxious Bench*, a searing indictment of the frontier revivalism that Barton Stone and others worked so hard to implement. In the 1830s Nevin—a graduate of Princeton Seminary—took a post at Western Seminary in the then still small city of Pittsburgh. The city's hinterland still very much remained frontier in the 1830s and 1840s, and dislike of his democratic frontier neighbors made his professorship an uneasy post to fill for a figure like Nevin who disliked democracy and untrammeled liberalism. For example, a few years after writing *The Anxious Bench*, Nevin denounced the liberal democratic revolutions in Europe as antichrist. Nevin's mission to the frontier seminary and his polemics against revivalist frontier Christianity did not come from a place of affectionate revision, but of antipathy. Nevin wanted to conquer and subjugate frontier religion, not refine it. He called John Wesley—who Nevin associated with the worst excesses of frontier religion—a "small man" compared to Reformation era luminaries like Philip Melanchthon. Nevin's dislike of frontier religion carried over into his dislike of frontier life in general. D.G. Hart helpfully notes that "tenuous existence in a frontier town" annoyed Nevin to the point he sought a posting elsewhere." Nevin found a new professorship back east in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania and he found a decidedly more Old World communion—the German Reformed church—as well.[20]

CONCLUSION

Frontier revivalism has filled the imaginations of religious and non-religious observers from the nineteenth century to our own time. The idea that such religion is typically American, is reinforced by telemedia like HBO's hit *The Righteous Gemstones* and by the popular association of so-called "Christian nationalism" with theologically charismatic Christians closely aligned to Donald Trump. The rise of so-called "evangelicalism" in

18. Thomas C. Reeves, "James Lloyd Breck and the Founding of Nashotah House." *Anglican and Episcopal History* 65, no. 1 (1996): 50–81.

19. Matthew D. Smith, "Barton Warren Stone: Revisiting Revival in the Early Republic," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 111, no. 2 (2013): 161–97

20. Timothy Mason Roberts, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge of American Exceptionalism* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 114; John Williamson Nevin, *The Anxious Bench* (Chambersburg, PA: 1844), vii; D.G. Hart, *John Williamson Nevin: High Church Calvinist* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 57-58..

the latter half of the twentieth century further clouded the nature of frontier revival in the United States. Presbyterians like D. James Kennedy (1930-2007) made common political cause with charismatics and pushed ideas of national revival using language downstream from democratic frontier revivalists instead of his own Presbyterian confession.[21]

The frontier, however, never represented American religiosity, even among religious bodies associated with the frontier. In 1968, seventy-five years after Frederick Jackson Turner declared that there was no longer a frontier, even the frontier churches had been thoroughly domesticated and subjugated to the older social norms of the east. Joan Didion could narrate the history of her hometown, Sacramento, California, as a place settled by inferentially Scots-Irish frontiersmen eventually domesticated by older forms of Protestantism that rejected revivalism: "The settlers came—the farmers, the people who for two hundred years had been moving west on the frontier, the peculiarly flawed strain who had cleared Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri; they made Sacramento a farm town." That same farm town of the 1850s turned into a twentieth century American city where the prominent citizens owned Cadillacs, lived in Country Clubs, and worshiped at Trinity Episcopal Church. Frontier religion was never as powerful or as influential as advertised. Even the revivals themselves were never particularly frontier in spirit. They were undertaken, argued Bernard Weisbrger, "entirely in the spirit of counterattack, and with the awful urgency of the defensive." Figures like Beecher, Episcopal bishops like Otey and Kemper, and Nevin, set in motion that eventual conquest of the frontier by older forms of Protestant religiosity, and they undoubtedly succeeded. There's a reason why people across the country watch *The Righteous Gemstones*–and it's not because they think it's representative of the Protestant church down the street.[22]

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21. Phil Christman, "The Surprising Profundity of The Righteous Gemstones," *The Atlantic (*4 Aug 2023). https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2023/08/the-righteous-gemstones-season-3-finale-review/674912/; Leah Payne and Erica Ramirez, "The Christian sect that has always cheered on Donald Trump," *Washington Post* (21 March 2018). https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/03/21/the-christian-sect-that-has-always-cheered-on-donald-trump/; D. James Kennedy, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 230;

22. Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (New York: Modern Library, orig 1968), 156-58; Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered At The River The Story Of The Great Revivalists And Their Impact Upon Religion In America* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1958), 4.

ESSAYS

The Truth of Being: Christianity, Science, and the Knowability of the Universe

PAUL S. JULIENNE

THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

Articles on "Christianity and Science" often retread the same ground again and again. The intentions are laudable, no doubt. But anyone interested in the topic has doubtless had their fill over the years of debates about intelligent design and evolution, the age of the earth, examinations of the fossil record and so forth. When it comes to the intersection of theology and science (and I will throw philosophy into the mix, too), there are, in fact, more fundamental questions to answer. Debates over scientific questions largely amount to disputes about the interpretation: how do we best make sense of all we know? But before such arguments can even begin, the serious student of science, theology, and philosophy must ask: how is it that we are able to know anything about this universe of ours–much less talk about it–in the first place?

As I was walking with my daughter this morning, we were talking about this essay and how hard it is to compress everything I wish to say into the space available.[1] It is a tall order to try to relate Christian faith, philosophy, and the natural sciences to see how in Jesus Christ "all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). While the world manifests a wide range of intelligibility to human science and understanding, human speech invariably runs into limits. This raises questions for us: in what sense are limits good and in what sense not? Are there limits to human knowledge, to the intelligibility of things to the human mind? What limits should there be on technology that conceivably could destroy us? Do these matters have anything to do with the truth of being? And what does philosophy have to do with it?

As we walked on, my eye fell upon an acorn in a sunbeam by the path. I stopped and picked it up. How insignificant the poor acorn seemed, so very small, but quite specific. As I rolled the acorn in my hand, my scientific mind went to the vast complexity and de-

1. Let me express my gratitude to my daughter, Alicia Bradford, for insightful reading and conversation on this essay.

tail within it. Its cells and genome contain a wealth of molecular information connecting it to untold past generations and giving it the potential to become a giant oak, generating countless new acorns and new oak trees. Any being, this acorn included, can only be what it is by being delimited—this is what enables a thing to be precisely the individual thing it is and nothing else. Yet no thing is ever itself alone—it participates in an order of being that vastly surpasses it, enabling it to be. To say the least, the acorn needs the right conditions of soil, water, temperature, and light to fulfill its end as part of a larger order.

IF THINGS HAVE NO INTRINSIC MEANING TO MANY MODERN PEOPLE, IT IS BECAUSE THEY HAVE LOST A SENSE OF BEING.

Humanity faces a civilizational crisis in the twenty-first century, arising from the loss of a sense of meaning in our cosmos other than that which human beings make for themselves. By reductively limiting how we perceive the whole, we have ironically lost a sense of proper limits to knowledge and action that open us up to meaning. This is due in part to an "atomization" or fragmentation of knowledge in the modern mind and to a "turn to the subject" in early modern philosophy that severed the connection between the individual subject and meaning in the external world. It is also due to the various sciences, being modern themselves, disavowing the seeking of meaning or purpose in the natural orders they study. Consequently, technology drives the world at an ever-increasing rate of change, motivated by a desire for control with few moral or ethical limits on the scope of what it can do.

The great twentieth-century physicist Richard Feynman (1918-1988), reflecting in a public lecture in 1963 on what science has taught us, spoke of science's self-limitation in investigating only the "how" of things but not their ultimate meaning. He pointed out that the sciences do not tell us what is good or bad or what we ought to do. In other words, ethics lies outside the competency of the sciences as they are now practiced. Feynman concluded:

> What then is the meaning of it all? What can we say to dispel the mystery of existence? If we take everything into account, not only what the ancients knew, but also all those things we have found out up to today that they didn't know, then I think that we must frankly admit that we do not know.[2]

Feynman was not a believer, yet expressed his great admiration for "Christian ethics—the basis of action on love, the brotherhood of all men, the value of the individual, the humility of the spirit."[3] He clearly acknowledged that he did not know how to put science and religion together: more specifically, how to put the scientific spirit of adventure together with a motivated Christian ethic based on love. But Feynman saw the importance of a proper grounding for ethical human action and raised this question: "How can we draw inspiration to support these two pillars of Western civilization so that they may stand together in full vigor, mutually unafraid?"[4] Such inspiration will take more than "science." Feynman wisely saw that it required both humility of intellect and humility of spirit. I would argue that the rich tradition of philosophical thinking within the Christian world has the depth to address "the mystery of existence" in a compelling way such that theology and science can "stand together in full vigor, mutually unafraid."

To engage in philosophical thinking is to engage in metaphysics, which literally means "beyond physics." Traditional metaphysics was concerned with the study of "being as being," where "being" includes the entirety of "what is," nothing excluded. Here let us simply take "metaphysics" to mean those foundational principles that lie beyond what any science can establish but that we cannot help but have about what we think is real. Neither specialized science nor ordinary living can do without at least a tacit metaphysics that gives a "plausibility structure" to guide thought and action. As D.C. Schindler so powerfully put it in one of his es-

2. Richard Feynman, *The Meaning of It All* (London: Penguin, 1998), 33 (the lecture was published posthumously).

3. Feynman, *Meaning of It All*, 48.

4. Feynman, *Meaning of It All*, 48.

says: "praxis is always and without exception rooted in and expressive of theory."[5] The linguistic root of theory, θεωρία, *theoria*, pertains to "seeing," a receptive beholding of what is. What we do turns on what we envision the truth of the world to be.

If things have no intrinsic meaning to many modern people, it is because they have lost a sense of *being*. Moderns no longer care to pose the question of being at all—they accept things as "just there," a given brute fact of the world. If things have no natural meaning and if we must assign our own meaning from our own subjectivities, then the "logic" of the "immanent frame" of secular modernity[6] is all too easily driven to a hermeneutic of suspicion fueling a will to power. The technological mindset of the immanent frame has a logic that is indifferent to any transcendent order beyond the "horizontal" frame of this world. This "logic" drives an increasingly irrational and conflicted public square.

Such matters may seem far away from my opening meditations on the knowability of the universe, and the place of a single acorn within it. But really, they all hang together. If the acorn is not knowable, then nothing is. If the acorn *is* knowable, then so are all things. All of this rests on the question of being.

THE TRUTH OF BEING KATH' HOLON

If we are to recover a sense of being, we need to see the whole of being in all its splendor and depth. As D.C. Schindler points out, human reason is essentially καθ' ὅλον, *kath' holon*, "according to the whole."[7] The human mind is open to the full range of being as a whole and grasps both its universal abstract aspects and its instantiation in concrete individual things. But the modern scientific mind has lost a sense that we live in an "implicate order" where individual things get their meaning from a transcending and enfolding whole that enables each thing to be and make sense within the greater whole.[8]

Scientists need to remember the simple fact that the world is intelligible, even if not all is fully understood. This then prompts us to ask: *why* is science possible in the first place? Why are there human beings with minds that desire to comprehend the cosmos–and furthermore who possess language with which to express their comprehension?

I would suggest that Thomas Aquinas's (1225-1274) articulation of creation *ex nihilo* is a key to answering these questions well. This philosophical notion concerns what the world is, not the details of how the cosmos goes about its cosmological or developmental processes studied by the sciences. To my thinking as a scientist, there is nothing that physics has discovered about the universe that conflicts with Aquinas's metaphysics of creation.

Josef Pieper says that in Aquinas "the notion of creation determines and characterizes the interior structure of nearly all the basic concepts in St. Thomas's philosophy of Being;" that is, "nothing exists which is not *creatura*, except the Creator Himself." [9] Anglican theologian Simon Oliver puts it this way: "God and creation do not share 'existence' or 'being' in common because God is existence itself, in which creation participates… God exists essentially (*per essentiam*), creation exists by participation (*per participationem*)."[10]

5. D.C. Schindler, "Truth and the Christian Imagination: The Reformation of Causality and the Iconoclasm of the Spirit," *Communio* 33 (Winter, 2006), 536.

6. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007).

7. D.C. Schindler, *The Catholicity of Reason* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids: 2013), 3.

8. The concept of an "implicate order" is a foundational idea, often associated with physicist David Bohm (1917-1992). We need not follow Bohm's particular interpretation of quantum physics to appreciate the power of his idea. Here "order" means "under the aspect of," so that we could speak of the political order, the order of science, the noetic order of mind, etc. An implicate order is one in which the distinct "things" within it are mutually related within a whole that enables the "parts" to make sense by virtue of a certain priority of the whole. A natural ecological system provides an example.

9. Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays*, trans. John Murray, S.J. and Daniel O'Connor (Chicago: St. Augustine's Press, 3rd Edition, 1999), 47.

10. Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2017), 50, 61; see also the work by other Anglican theologians, e.g., Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine or Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) or Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

"Participation" is a philosophical term that characterizes the entities in the created order: for a thing to participate is to receive its being or existence from another that possesses being essentially, which is only true of God.[11] To receive being by participation is to be caused.[12] The relation is fundamentally asymmetrical: whereas creatures are "like" God (to Aquinas, all effects bear some "likeness" to their causes), the being of God is infinitely dissimilar from the being of creatures. Oliver explains that "God's relation to creation is more intimate and immediate than relations between creatures–precisely because of the sheer difference between God and creation."[13]

PHILOSOPHER JACQUES MARITAIN EXPRESSED IT BEAUTIFULLY: "THERE IS A NUPTIAL RELATION BETWEEN MIND AND BEING."

Perhaps the deepest mystery of the cosmos is its *being*–that there is something rather than nothing. The second deepest mystery is that the human mind finds the world intelligible, that so much is accessible to our self-transcending minds. As Aristotle put it and Thomas Aquinas reaffirmed, "in a sense the soul [ψυχὴ, *anima*] is all existing things."[14] To me this is one of the most remarkable sayings in all of Aristotle or Aquinas. The human mind ("intellectual soul" to Aquinas) and reality are attuned to one another. Philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) expressed it beautifully: "There is a nuptial relation between mind and being."[15] We can truly know the world in all its vastness—all existing things! —even if incompletely. There is a sense in which all things can take up residence in our minds and be spoken forth in language, in principle intelligible to all. Albert Einstein recognized this mystery of the intelligibility of being, the mystery of the conformity of being to our minds, when he wrote: "The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility… The fact that it is comprehensible is a miracle."[16] Our minds "take hold of" reality in an active and miraculous way and render it intelligible.

Grasping the meaning of being entails grasping what we call its "transcendental" aspects–truth, goodness, and (in many reckonings) beauty. The transcendentals are "unbounded," without limit–they apply at all levels of being, from God right down to the smallest insect, and down further still. To Aquinas they speak of all being, created and uncreated, and thus speak to the "meaning of it all." Schindler says: [17]

> What is at issue in the transcendentals, in short, is the most basic meaning of things and so man's fundamental relationship with the world, with himself and others, and with God. … [T]hey transcend even the borders of creation itself; they describe not only the being of all creation, but also the being of God, which is infinitely different from created being. … [In] the transcendentals there is an inseparable connection between the particular and the universal, which is to say that it is ultimately not possible to affirm (or indeed: to deny) that any particular thing is beautiful, good, or true in a proper sense without implicitly affirming

11. That Aquinas adapted the neo-Platonic concept of participation as an essential background component of his thinking has been rediscovered by twentieth-century scholarship. See, for example, Cornelio Fabro, *Selected Works, Volume 1, Selected Articles on Metaphysics and Participation* (IVE Press, 2016), or Chapter 5 of W. Norris Clarke, S. J., *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Person* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

12. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.44, a.1.

13. Simon Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 51.

14. Aristotle's words, ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πώς ἐστι πάντα, are given in Book 3.8 of *De Anima*, and are quoted by Aquinas in *De Veritate*, q.1, a.1, reply.

15. Quoted by W. Norris Clarke, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic* Metaphysics (University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 18.

16. The English translation of Einstein's article appears along with his original German in the *Journal of the Franklin Institute*, March 1936, with the English title "Physics and Reality." Einstein's original sentence is, "*Das ewig Unbegreifliche an der Welt ist ihre Begreiflichkeit*," literally rendered "The eternally incomprehensible thing about the world is its comprehensibility." The German verb *greifen,* a root of *Begreiflichkeit,* "comprehensibility," means to grab, to grasp, to take hold of. Einstein also used the German words for a miracle, "*ein Wunder*."

17. D. C. Schindler, *Love and the Postmodern Predicament: Rediscovering the Real in Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018), 18, 22.

> (or denying) that the property belongs to the nature of reality as such.

To make this concrete: I can only truly affirm the goodness or beauty of the acorn in my hand at the beginning of this essay if these are real properties of being as such–is there *really* are such things as truth, goodness, and beauty. Otherwise, I am just playing with words. Aquinas helps us to see even an acorn *kath' holon*.

AQUINAS ON THE TRUTH OF BEING

Aquinas addresses the transcendental aspects of being at the start of his *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate.* He asks specifically, "What is truth?"[18] His answer demonstrates that truth is clearly far more than the correctness of a proposition—it implicates all of reality. Joseph Pieper says that "St. Thomas's doctrine of truth can be grasped in its proper and profoundest meaning only if we bring into play this notion of creation."[19] Ironically, Thomas's question is the same one posed by Pontius Pilate to Jesus standing before him, who had just said "for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice" (Jn. 18:38). Being is not without its witness.

Aquinas tells us "that which the intellect first conceives as, in a way, the most evident, and to which it reduces all its concepts, is being [*ens*]. Consequently, all the other conceptions of the intellect are had by additions to being."[20] Truth is not the same as being but is one of those predicates that may be said to "add to" being inasmuch as it expresses a mode of being not expressed by the term "being." There are two ways such a mode can add to being. One mode can express a certain manner of being, such as substance, which "simply expresses a special manner of existing, namely, as a being in itself." A second mode of being "is one that is common, and consequent upon every being. This mode can be taken in two ways: first, in so far as it follows upon every being considered absolutely [*ens in se*]; second, in so far as it follows upon every being [*ens*] considered in relation to another [*in ordine ad aliud*]."

Of the second mode of being, the first way can be said positively or negatively. The positive refers to the essence of a thing, the negative to its undividedness (*ens indivisum*), expressed by one [*unum*]. Thus, an existing thing is a single definite what-it-is unity. Next comes the transcendental relations of one being to another. A being (*ens*) is an *aliquid*, "something," distinct in some way apart from others, an individual, yet it is not alone—it is related to other beings. The true and the good express relation *"according to the correspondence one being has with another"* (*secundum convenientiam unius entis ad aliud*):

> This is possible only if there is something which is such that it agrees with [*convenire*] every being. Such a being is the soul [*anima*], which, as is said in The Soul, "in some way is all things [*quae quodammodo est omnia*]." The soul, however, has both knowing and appetitive powers. Good expresses the correspondence [*convenientiam*] of being [*entis*] to the appetitive power, for, and so we note in the Ethics, the good is "that which all desire." True expresses the correspondence [*convenientiam*] of being [*entis*] to the knowing power, for all knowing is produced by an assimilation [*assimilationem*] of the knower to the thing [*res*] known, so that assimilation is said to be the cause of knowledge.

This is a key paragraph. One being can have a *convenientiam,* a "coming together" or agreement, with another being only to the extent that "there is something that agrees with [*convenire*] every being." There is a being that does precisely that: a knowing being with a "intellectual soul," which, as Aristotle says, "in some way is all things." Here Aquinas speaks of the human *anima* (soul), which has both knowing and appetitive powers. The "appetitive power" is directed towards the good (even if our appetites can be sinfully misdirected). The "knowing power" is directed to the true.[21] It is pre-

18. Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate,* q.1, a.1

19. Pieper, *Silence of St. Thomas*, 48.

20. Aquinas, *De Veritate* q.1, a.1, reply.

21. How knowledge comes about from sense input through the active and passive powers of the human mind is treated elsewhere by Thomas; see especially *Summa Theologiae* I, q.79, I; q.84, and I, q.85.

cisely in the "agreement" (*convenientiam*), or "similarity, likeness" (*assimilationem*), between the mind or soul and a thing (*res*) that accounts for what it means for something to be "true." Aquinas says: "This agreement is called the conformity of thing and intellect [concordia adaequatio intellectus et rei]."[22] Aquinas tells us that while truth primarily resides in the mind, it also is not improper to see it in things, since things conform to the mind of God.[23]

Aquinas also recognized that truth has many dimensions. Another way of defining truth "is according to the effect following upon it. Thus, Hilary says that the true is that which manifests and proclaims existence. And Augustine says: 'Truth is that by which that which is, is shown.'"[24] This sense of truth as disclosure, whereby a thing manifests, unconceals, or reveals itself relates to the sense of the Greek word for truth, αλήθεια, *aletheia*, derived as a compound word from "*a-*", meaning "not," and the verb *lanthánō*, "to lie hidden." Things truly reveal what they are to our minds—they become "not hidden" in some respect. This is the irony of Jesus before Pilate—he was manifesting the truth right before Pilate's eyes, but Pilate was blind, and the truth remained hidden to him.

Since truth consists in a conformity or agreement between an intellect and a thing, things are known in one way by the creative divine intellect and in another way by human beings with an intellectual soul. Created things are thus between two intellects, divine and human. Created things are real and have natures precisely because they are creatively thought by God. That is the source of the truth and intelligibility of being. According to Aquinas, while the divine intellect "measures" all things, the human intellect "is measured by" natural things and can only "measure" artifacts made by human beings.[25] Thus, God is the ultimate "measure" of the truth of all things, not man.

Pieper tells us that it is because beings are creatively thought by God that they have an inner clarity and intelligibility. Things are knowable because they are created. But Pieper also reminds us of the fact that a human being can never know how God creatively thinks being, since this is on the side of the unknowable divine essence. Consequently, all things have a certain unfathomable depth to them that gives to all created being an "unknowable" dimension.[26] Something in them remains hidden even as they positively reveal themselves to us. This is an essential feature of created being itself and underlies Aquinas's philosophical and theological apophaticism, which is most definitely not like a modern radical skepticism that denies we can know God or things. We *do* know things and their truth, but never fully, for the full truth of any being, like the being of God, is bathed in an inexhaustible light that exceeds our comprehension. This gives us a deeper sense of the meaning of John Calvin's famous description of creation as "a theater of God's glory."

Schindler points out that the logic of our technological culture is instrumental power and pragmatic control. Those in the grip of such a mindset are incapable of philosophy proper, incapable of asking about or seeing what is truly real. Such a mindset denies the reality of the transcendentals, reducing goodness, truth, and beauty to subjective feelings without ultimate meaning. The technological mind sees the world as a given, a *datum* to be exploited. In stark contrast, Schindler says: "The truth of things, transcendentally speaking, is a display of their intrinsic meaning, which is to be affirmed for its own sake; it is not a mere set of facts, a collection of data to be recorded in relation to some project or other. Our most fundamental relation to a world as beautiful, good, and true is love."[27] God's creative act is expressive of his very nature as triune love. Simon Oliver says: "the difference between God and creation is not a random and inscrutable difference; it is a participation in, or trace of, the eternal differences and relations of the Godhead. … God's act of creation is not simply a result of the divine will, impenetrable to reason. It is an expression of the very nature of God

22. Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q.1, a.1, reply.

23. Aquinas, *De Veritate* q.1, a.2, reply.

24. Aquinas, *De Veritate* q.1, a.1, reply.

25. Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q.1, a.2, reply; to Aquinas "measure" does not mean a quantitative measurement as in the sciences; rather it implies a judgment or distinction of the mind (see *Summa Theologiae* I, q.79, a.9, ad.5).

26. Pieper, *Silence of St. Thomas*, 59.

27. Schindler, *Love and the Postmodern Predicament*, 26.

himself … an expression of God's eternal nature as self-donating love. The real relation of creation to God is a participation in the real relations of the persons of the Trinity."[28] Creation is an intelligible gift of love, a *donum*, for the sake of our being here, imaging God and participating in the created order.

CONCLUSION

We return then to our opening considerations. Before our scientific-theological debates begin, how is it even possible to know the universe we debate, and to find sensible language that is adequate to the task? How can we understand how an acorn fits into the rest of the cosmos? And how can we avoid sliding into a Nietzschean world devoid of real value?

I have sketched out, all too briefly, that the most intelligible response to these questions lies in the same place: the truth of being, specifically as articulated by traditional Christian metaphysics. This very metaphysics makes us aware of an unfathomable mystery to being that limits our understanding and requires a humility of intellect and spirit in seeking the truth of the world. Yet, this same metaphysics enables us to make sense of the knowability of the universe, of Maritain's "nuptial relation" between mind and world, in a way that no materialistic scientism could ever do. When the reality of such a nuptial relation becomes apparent, we find ourselves drawn into the reality of being *kath' holon*, and find the acorn sat snugly within a vast tapestry of reality, in which it truly participates in a truth, goodness, and beauty shared by all things. And the reality of such truth, goodness, and beauty calls us to rightly ordered love and away from a world run according to the will to power. The truth of being confronts us, again and again.

An urgent task for Christians today is demonstrating how our vast cosmos manifests the truth, goodness, and beauty of God, given how much more we know in the realm of the sciences than we did in the fourth or thirteenth centuries in which so much of our metaphysics was hashed out. Yet–speaking as both a Christian and a physicist of many decades–I am confident that if we draw on the resources of that metaphysical tradition with a humility appropriate to our nature, we will find ample resources for the task.

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28. Oliver, *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 52.

At The Contented Cow

BY CASEY SPINKS

So I'm a fundamentalist
to my new friends.
They, gaily secular, ask, have I evangelized?
And I reply, I have.
Oh, and a miracle, have I seen one of those too?
It's true, I half-sigh, and tell of the time:

I fell asleep at the wheel on River Road,
and somehow took unconscious turns,
and followed a path not my own,
and awoke to a minor crash and did not die.

They nod and thank my vulnerability,
which strikes me as odd,
since I'd just claimed my time was held up by Eternity.
They, scholars of a certain Dane,
have read of the same in complex books,
written under cover of alien names and grammatic tricks.

But in talk over beers, simply spoken and heard,
my words seem weak, foolish, lowly.
Still it may be an edifying, holy word,
to those who wake up after the impact;
to those who live.

ESSAYS

The Reception History of the Thirty-Nine Articles in the Church of England: 1571 – 1662[1]

RANDALL J. PRICE

It is sometimes said in jest that Anglican theology is the unending task of Anglicans attempting to answer the question, "what is Anglicanism?" Modern Anglicanism seems to have little self-understanding of its own rich tradition. However, when turning to the primary sources, it appears that the Anglican divines of the English Reformation had a clearer, though by no means uniform, perception of what the English church was in terms of its theological and liturgical commitments.

One of the chief areas of disagreement concerns the status of the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*. While none can dispute the importance of the *Articles* to the Anglican tradition and their formal recognition during the reign of Elizabeth I in 1571, scholars disagree on how they were received and functioned in the years following. Some, such as J.I. Packer and Stephen Hampton, insist that the *Articles* are an Anglican confession of faith, summarizing the beliefs and practices necessary to Anglicanism that are still binding on Anglicans today.[2] Some claim that Anglicanism, unlike other magisterial Protestant traditions, has no confession of any sort.[3] Geoffrey Rowell, for instance has made

1. I would like to thank Scott Manetsch and John Woodbridge for providing feedback on an earlier version of this essay, and Rhys Laverty for some excellent suggestions that helped sharpen my argument.

2. J.I. Packer and R.T. Beckwith, *The Thirty-Nine Articles: Their Place and Use Today* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2007). Stephen Hampton, "Confessional Identity," in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume 1: Reformation and Identity, c. 1520–1662*, ed. Anthony Milton (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 210–242.

3. Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and The Christian Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989). Scott MacDougall, *The Shape of Anglican Theology* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2022). Torrance Kirby, "Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Elizabethan Church," in *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain,* eds. Polly Ha and Patrick Collinson (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 83–106, 84.

this contention, arguing that the Church of England did not draft a confession of faith similar to any of the continental churches, and instead relied primarily on the ecumenical creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian).[4] Others, while recognizing a confessional role of the *Articles* historically, no longer see them as authoritative or necessary for an Anglican identity.[5] Rather, the *Articles* merely represent some theological trends of the late sixteenth and early seventeeth century Church of England, with no binding authority beyond their historic and geographical context. On all sides, although superficial appeals to the history of confessionalism in the Church of England are presented, it seems the driving forces behind various commitments are primarily theological posturing and church politics.

ON ALL SIDES, ALTHOUGH SUPERFICIAL APPEALS TO THE HISTORY OF CONFESSIONALISM IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND ARE PRESENTED, IT SEEMS THE DRIVING FORCES BEHIND VARIOUS COMMITMENTS ARE PRIMARILY THEOLOGICAL POSTURING AND CHURCH POLITICS.

Against those who insist on removing or altering the *Thirty-Nine Articles* to accommodate the times, little can be said. Such revisionism, however, remains uncommon in the Anglican tradition. More common is the position taken by Rowell and others, which asserts that the Church of England's relationship to the *Articles*, along with later Anglican bodies, has *always* been flexible, and thus amending or removing them would be inconsequential for a historic Anglican identity. This position, however, bears a high burden of proof. Does Anglican history reflect this attitude toward the *Thirty-Nine Articles*?

In order to make some headway into a sober historical analysis of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, a necessary step is to examine primary source evidence that sheds light on the ways in which the *Articles* were received among ecclesial authorities between 1571 and 1662, the time of Elizabeth I to the restoration under Charles II. This period is significant for several reasons. First, it covers almost the first century of the *Articles*' existence and use in the church. Should any supposed laxity have existed in the church's relationship to the *Articles*, it surely would have become evident during this time. Second, this period covers generational changes in the monarchy and church leadership. During this time we see a shift from the Tudor to the Stuart dynasties, the rise of Puritanism, a proto Anglo-Catholic movement, and a civil war that was partly ignited over religious disagreements. These would have exposed any flexibility had it been a live option for the Church of England at the time. Third, 1662 marks the introduction of another major element of the Anglican tradition, the *1662 Book of Common Prayer*. This edition provided a new sense of liturgical and doctrinal uniformity to the Anglican Church, and marked the beginning of consistent inclusion of the *Articles* in subsequent printings of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

An examination of official statements from monarchs, bishops, and other ecclesial authorities during this timeframe, I contend, shows that the *Articles* undoubtedly did serve as an authoritative confession of faith in the early Church of England.[6] For the purposes of this essay, I define confession in the following way: a confession is an authoritative statement of doctrine that claims to articulate the truths of Scripture for a distinct ecclesial body composed of a plurality of churches through successive generations. Furthermore, confessions function as a doctrinal standard for ordained clergy, a pedagogical tool for teaching and catechesis of the laity, and can be used in matters of church discipline over doctrinal issues.

4. Geoffery Rowell, "The Confessions of Faith of the Early Church as seen in the Classical Anglican Tradition," *Anglican and Episcopal History* Vol. 60, No. 3 (1991): pp. 305–328.

5. Victor Atta-Baffoe, "Living in Communion with Anglicanism," *Journal of Anglican* Studies Vol. 14, No. 2 (2016): 226–235, 229.

6. In this essay, I have limited myself to examination of documents by senior church authorities. A study of how the *Articles* were received by local priests and lay people would be a fascinating contribution, but lies beyond our scope.

THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES IN THE ELIZABETHAN CHURCH

When Queen Elizabeth I ascended the throne in 1558, the Church of England was in disarray following Queen Mary's reign. Elizabeth's church was home to both Roman holdouts and newly impassioned Puritans. To provide some stability, Elizabeth reverted to the status quo at the end of Edward VI's reign in 1553, repealing Mary's various anti-Protestant ecclesial laws.[7] Yet one element of Edward's brief Protestant reign remained missing. *The Forty-Two Articles of Religion*, whose brief confessional status was cut short with Edward's death just a month after their adoption, were not revived.[8]

In 1563, Convocation was finally tasked with drafting a new doctrinal statement. This became the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Far from original, these were essentially a revision of the *Forty-Two Articles*.[9] Though authorized in 1563, the *Articles* would not receive full royal approval and authority until 1571, largely due to dispute over Article 29 on the eucharist. Peter Marshall is correct in stating that "Elizabeth's Church now possessed a doctrinal 'Confession,' but the status of the articles remained oddly provisional."[10] Yet the force of the *Articles* was felt early on. For example, one reform proposal presented in the Lower House of Convocation in 1563 had requested a weakening of the language in Article 33, "Of Excommunicated Persons." Clearly, the *Articles* were important enough to be worth arguing about from the beginning.[11]

The Canons of 1571, issued by Convocation alongside the now officially recognized *Thirty-Nine Articles*, contain the first regulations associated with the *Articles*. Though not signed by Elizabeth, these canons contain valuable insights into the attitude of the bishops and served as a basis for the 1604 canons that would receive royal sanction. Canon 6 declares:

> And since those Articles of the Christian Religion to which assent was given by the bishops in lawful and holy synod convened and celebrated by… Elizabeth… collected from the holy books of the Old and New Testament… contain nothing contrary to this same doctrine, whosoever shall be sent to teach the people shall confirm the authority and faith of those Articles not only in their sermons but also by subscription. Whoever does otherwise, and perplexes the people with contrary doctrine, shall be excommunicated.[12]

The clergy were required to subscribe to and teach in accordance with the *Articles*, on pain of excommunication. It is important to recognize that while Canon 6 is directed at the clergy, the intention is to enforce unity in the church and provide sound biblical teaching to the laity. However, contemporary historians, such as Rowell, are quick to write off the *Articles* as confessional because subscription was required only of clergy, not laity (later documents, we will see, reveal it was not so simple).[13] But this misses the point entirely: the very reason for clerical subscription was to ensure that the laity heard and affirmed sound doctrine.

Later in 1571, Parliament passed the Subscription Act, officially requiring clergy to subscribe to the *Articles*. Notably, a different bill, motivated by Puritan sympathies, that would only require subscription to some "core doctrinal" portion of the *Articles* was rejected in favor of the Subscription Act.[14]

7. "The Act of Supremacy, 1559," in *Documents of the English Reformation*, ed. Gerald Bray (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co. Ltd, 1994), pp. 318–329, 319.

8. Peter Toon, "The Articles and Homilies, in *The Study of Anglicanism*, eds. Stephen Sykes and John Booty (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 133–142, 135.

9. G.R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors.* 3rd edition. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 289. For a helpful side-by-side comparison of the Forty-Two, Thirty-Eight, and Thirty-Nine Articles, see: *Documents of the English Reformation,* pp. 284–311.

10. Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 458.

11. "The Seven Articles," in *English Historical Documents: 1558–1603*, eds. Ian W. Archer and F. Douglas Price (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 168.

12. "Selection from the Canons of 1571," in *Documents Illustrative of English Church History,* ed. Henry Gef and William John Hardy (Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1966), pp. 476–477.

13. Rowell, "The Confessions of Faith of the Early Church as seen in the Classical Anglican Tradition," 305.

14. Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 500.

THE CLERGY ALONE MUST SUBSCRIBE, BUT THE LAITY MUST HEAR AND EVEN HOLD THE CLERGY ACCOUNTABLE TO THEIR PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION.

The Subscription Act demanded that each member of the clergy "declare his assent, and subscribe to all the articles of religion, which only concern the confession of the true Christian faith and the doctrine of the sacraments."[15] Furthermore, the priest must present a signed certificate from his bishop authenticating his subscription, and publicly "read the said testimonial and the said Articles" before the parish, with the penalty of removal from the clergy for failing to do so.[16] The Act also requires that, from henceforth, all future candidates for ordination to the priesthood must subscribe to and publicly read the *Articles* before the parish church with a declaration of assent.[17] It is of great significance that this act, along with the subscription, required such public recognition. This illustrates an important way in which the *Articles* were intended to be received by the entire church: the clergy alone must subscribe, but the laity must hear and even hold the clergy accountable to their public subscription.

The Subscription Act certainly made an impression on the Puritan wing of the English church, provoking *The First Admonition to Parliament* which voiced the complaints of Puritan clergy: "Their pontifical (which is annexed to the *Book of Common Prayer*, and whereunto subscribing to the articles, we must subscribe also)… is nothing else but a thing word for word drawn out of the pope's pontifical, wherein he showeth himself to be Antichrist most lively."[18] The substance of these criticisms are not the point of the present discussion. This harsh reaction simply illustrates the forceful requirement for subscription to the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, and the impact it was having on the Church of England.

In 1583, Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift (r.1583-1604) issued the *Articles Touching Preachers and Other Orders for the Church*. In it, Whitgift lists a number of requirements for those who "preach, read, catechize, minister the sacraments, or… execute any other ecclesiastical function," the most relevant of which is that

> he alloweth the book of Articles of religion, agreed upon by the archbishops and bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergy in the Convocation holden at London in the year of our Lord God 1562, and set forth by her majesty's authority, and that he believeth all the Articles therein contained to be agreeable to the word of God.[19]

Twelve years after their formal adoption, and through the transfer of ecclesial authority to a new archbishop, subscription to the *Articles* remained a necessary condition for ministry in the Church of England. Whitgift's instructions to his clergy go even further, demanding that ordinands be examined to "note the sentences of Scripture whereupon the truth of the said Articles is grounded."[20] It should be recognized, as Gerald Bray notes, that "These Articles were only haphazardly enforced during Elizabeth's reign, but they were incorporated as Canon 36 of the Canons of 1604, after which subscription to them was regularly insisted upon."[21] Yet this difficulty in enforcement was not for lack of Whitgift's zeal to do so. In a statement to the Privy Council, written later that year, he states, "The Gospel can take no success, neither the number of papists be

15. "The Subscription (Thirty-Nine Articles) Act, A.D. 1571," *Documents Illustrative of English Church History,* pp. 477–480, 478.

16. "The Subscription (Thirty-Nine Articles) Act, A.D. 1571," 478.

17. "The Subscription (Thirty-Nine Articles) Act, A.D. 1571," 479.

18. "The First Admonition, 1571," *English Historical Documents,* 1800–1803, 180l.

19. "Articles Touching Preachers and Other Orders for the Church, A.D. 1583," *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, pp. 481–484, 482. Whitgift uses a slight anachronism is describing the Articles as approved in 1562. He is certainly referring to the Articles as they appeared in 1571 with Elizabeth's approval.

20. "Articles Touching Preachers and Other Orders for the Church, A.D. 1583," 483.

21. Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation*, 397. See also: Hampton, "Confessional Identity," 214.

diminished, if unity be not procured; which I am not in doubt in short time to bring to pass, without any great ado or inconvenience at all, if it be not hindered."[22]

It should be clear, based on the sources discussed above, that the *Thirty-Nine Articles* were implemented and enforced as a confessional doctrinal authority for the Church of England during Queen Elizabeth I's reign. From 1571 to 1603, the *Articles* were the definitive public declaration of doctrine for the Church of England, both internally for its clergy and laity and externally to the Roman and other Protestant churches.

THE THIRTY NINE ARTICLES IN THE JACOBIAN CHURCH

King James I ascended the English throne in 1603. The few years leading up to this were contentious for Protestants sympathetic to Puritanism, a significant portion of whom desired further reforms than the Elizabethan church would allow and felt growing dissatisfaction with the *Book of Common Prayer*.[23] Though James seems to have been more amicable toward the Puritans, his ecclesial policies remained generally conservative.

The Canons of 1604 are perhaps the most often discussed primary source in debates surrounding the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Commissioned under the leadership of Whitgift but completed by his successor, Richard Bancroft (r.1604-1610), they built upon and expanded previous declarations and became the most comprehensive set of ecclesial rules for the Protestant Church of England up to that point. Canon 5 is the most significant for the status of the *Articles*:

> Whosoever shall hereafter affirm, That any of the nine and thirty Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, and the whole Clergy, in the Convocation holden at London, in the year of our Lord God one thousand five hundred sixty- two, for avoiding diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true Religion, are in any part superstitious or erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe unto; let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and not restored, but only by the Archbishop, after his repentance, and public revocation of such his wicked errors.[24]

To teach against the *Articles of Religion* was an offense worthy of excommunication, indicating the strict expectations of adherence to the doctrines set forth in them. This essentially repeats previous statements made in Parker's *Advertisements* (1566) and Whitgift's aforementioned *Articles Touching Preachers* (1583).[25]

Disagreement over what exactly was required by the 1604 Canons abounds in the Anglican tradition. For example, C.H. Davis disagrees with an interpretation of Canon 5 that would require strict adherence to the *Articles*. Relying on previous statements made by Archbishop William Laud (r.1633-1640), he argues,

> they are directed against open impugners only, and not against all who may privately differ from the Church's standards in some particulars. Thus Archbishop Laud, in his work 'On Tradition,' xiv., 2… in answer to the objection that the Church of England excommunicates every man who holds anything contrary to any part of the Articles, says: 'Surely these are not the very words of the Canon, nor perhaps the sense. Not the words; for they are, "Whosoever shall affirm that the Articles are in any part superstitious or erroneous," … and perhaps not the sense; for it is one thing for a man to hold an opinion privately within himself, and another thing boldly and publicly to affirm it.' So that the offence contemplated by the Canons appears to be not the mere holding of such opinions, nor the mere private dissent from some portions of the Church's standards, but the open impugning

22. "Whitgift to the Privy Council," *English Historical Documents*, pp. 852–854, 853.

23. Heidi Olson Campbell, "Of Blessed Memory," *Anglican and Episcopal History,* Vol. 91, No 4 (2022): pp. 429–454, 430.

24. C.H. Davis, *The English Church Canons of 1604* (London, UK: C. Roworth and Sons, 1869), 15.

25. Hampton, "Confessional Identity," 215.

> of them — the bold and public affirmation of disapproval of them.[26]

Yet, a closer look at other aspects of the 1604 Canons seems to suggest otherwise. Laud's interpretation of Canon 5, and those that stem from it, appears to be entirely novel and negligent of the broader context.

Canon 36 offers three "articles of subscription" for those who are to be received into ministry in the Church of England. First is recognition of the status of the monarch as supreme governor in England over matters both temporal (political) and spiritual (ecclesiastical). The second is the affirmation that the *Book of Common Prayer* and *Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons* "containeth in it nothing contrary to the Word of God, and that it may lawfully so be used." The third states:

> That he alloweth the Book of Articles of Religion agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, and the whole Clergy in the Convocation… and that he acknowledgeth all and every the Articles therein contained, being in number nine and thirty, besides the ratification, to be agreeable to the Word of God.[27]

Here we already begin to see a stronger claim concerning subscription to the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Not only are the clergy forbidden to publicly teach against them, they are also required to publicly acknowledge their agreeableness to the Scriptures. Yet Canon 36 goes even further in requiring the following statement of subscription:

> To these three Articles whosoever will subscribe, he shall, for the avoiding of all ambiguities, subscribe in this order and form of words, setting down both his Christian and Surname, viz., *I*, N. N., *do willingly and* ex animo *subscribe to these three Articles above mentioned, and to all things that are contained in them*.[28]

The important phrase to note here is the Latin *ex animo*, meaning "from the heart" or "sincerely." Whereas Laud, Davis, and others have asserted that Canon 5 requires verbal agreement at most, and minimally that one simply does not teach against the *Articles*, Canon 36 expects clergy to subscribe with full sincerity. Canons 77 and 127 would require similar standards for schoolmasters and judges.[29] In Bishop Gilbert Burnet's *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, published in 1699, he identified these weaknesses in the Laudian understanding of the *Articles* and 1604 Canons, and concluded that that "the laity may subscribe to the Articles as articles of doctrine, but the clergy must endorse them as articles of faith."[30]

CHURCH OF ENGLAND PREACHERS WERE EXPECTED TO CONFORM THEIR TEACHING TO THE ARTICLES AND HOMILIES. DEVIATION FROM EITHER WAS GROUNDS FOR CENSURE BY THE CHURCH.

The final major ecclesial statement concerning the *Articles* during the reign of James I discussed here is the *Directions Concerning Preachers* issued in 1622. This document was drafted by James I and circulated by Archbishop of Canterbury George Abbott (r.1611-1633) in response to controversies surrounding preaching in the Church of England. It emphasizes the authority of both the *Articles of Religion* and the *Book of Homilies*. All preachers are to "confine themselves wholly to those two heads of faith and good life, which are all the subject of the ancient sermons and homilies."[31] Church of England preachers were expected to conform their teaching to the *Articles* and *Homilies*. Deviation from either was grounds for censure by the church.

26. Davis, *The English Church Canons of 1604,* 13.

27. Davis, *The English Canons of 1604*, 39–40.

28. Davis, *The English Canons of 1604, 40.*

29. Davis, *The English Canons of 1604*, 75, 109.

30. Richard Nash, "Benevolent Readers: Burnet's Exposition and Eighteenth–Century Interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles," *Eighteenth–Century Studies,* Vol. 25, No. 3 (1992): 353–360, 359.

31. "Directions Concerning Preachers, A.D. 1622," *Documents Illustrative of English Church History,* 516–518, 517.

THE ARTICLES IN THE CAROLINGIAN CHURCH: CHARLES I, THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR, AND CHARLES II

Charles I succeeded James I in 1625, reigning until his execution in 1649. During this time diverging opinions on the *Articles* regarding their authority and function began to develop along clearer lines. We have already seen that Archbishop Laud, a fellow casualty of the English Civil War, laid the foundation for a latitudinarian perspective. This opinion ran contrary to those who viewed the *Articles* as a doctrinal and confessional authority–a view which is more in line with the ecclesial policies of the Carolingian Church of England. In 1628, *The King's Declaration* was drafted. This declaration was then prefixed to subsequent publications of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. It follows a similar pattern to the 1604 canons and other laws concerning the *Articles*; the clergy were required publicly and sincerely to subscribe to the *Articles*, while the laity were expected and admonished to agree and could suffer punishment for public disagreement.

> That the Articles of the Church of England (which have been allowed and authorized heretofore, and which our clergy generally have subscribed unto) do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's word: which we do therefore ratify and confirm, requiring all our loving subjects to continue in the uniform profession thereof, and prohibiting the least difference from the said Articles; which to that end we command to be new printed, and this our declaration to be published therewith…[32]

This declaration includes both a forceful statement on the authority of the *Articles* and an expectation on the laity to conform to them as well. For the clergy specifically, it requires a similar *ex animo* subscription from any who would preach, write, or teach in an ecclesial context. It requires "that no man hereafter shall either print, or preach, to draw the Articles aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof: and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense."[33]

The following year, a document known as *The Resolutions on Religion* was presented to and passed by the House of Commons. It was mainly concerned with the growth of "popery" in England, Scotland, and Ireland, representing a threat to the English church and obscuring true doctrine. The "popery" in question seems to be the growing popularity of an Arminian soteriology as opposed to moderate Calvinism. One of the factors thought to be contributing to this trend was

> The suppressing and restraint of the orthodox doctrine contained in the Articles of Religion… according to the sense which hath been received publicly, and taught as the doctrine of the Church of England in those points wherein the Arminians differ from us, and other the Reformed Churches; wherein the essence of our Articles, in those controverted points, is known and proved.[34]

Here, one of the primary reasons presented for the re-emergence of Catholicism in England was a failure to enforce the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, understood as a Reformed statement of doctrine. By permitting deviant and ahistorical interpretations, such as those making room for Arminian soteriology, the church had opened the door to doctrinal innovations inconsistent with the theology of the Church of England.[35]

In 1642, religious and political tension erupted in the English Civil War, leading eventually to the execution of both Charles I and Laud. The heavy-handed approach of Laud, with his penchant for ceremony and supposed Roman sympathies, were one of the contrib-

32. "The King's Declaration Prefixed to the Articles of Religion, November, 1628," *Documents Illustrative of English Church History,* 518–520, 519.

33. "The King's Declaration Prefixed to the Articles of Religion, November, 1628," 520.

34. "The Resolutions on Religion Presented by a Committee of the House of Commons, A.D. 1629," *Documents Illustrative of English Church History,* pp. 521–527, 525.

35. I do not mean to suggest here that Arminian soteriology is in fact incompatible with the Thirty-Nine Articles. I only mean to identify that this was the perspective given in the resolution and a reason for requiring stricter adherence to the Articles.

uting factors toward a Puritan revolt against the established church. By the time of Charles's death, the traditional marks of the Church of England would be replaced by a Presbyterian ecclesiology, a reformed *Directory of Public Worship*, and, in 1646, *The Westminster Confession*.[36] Yet even during this time the *Articles* were not utterly abandoned, especially in the early years of Parliamentary control.[37] Even the formation of *The Westminster Confession* was preceded with the Westminster Assembly first being tasked with simply revising the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and adding scriptural citations.[38]

For numerous reasons, the anti-monarchical and anti-episcopal revolution was short-lived. In 1660, Charles II was called back to England and would go on to restore the traditional Anglican features of the national church. In 1662, Charles instituted his own Act of Uniformity, similar to that of Elizabeth's in 1559, which will be the final source considered in this study. Much like Elizabeth's requirement of liturgical uniformity centered around the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, Charles II's would focus primarily on instituting the 1662 edition.[39]

The 1662 Act required that any who would be licensed to preach or teach in the Church of England must, "in the presence of the same archbishop, bishop, or guardian, read the nine-and-thirty Articles of Religion mentioned in the statute of the thirteenth year of the late Queen Elizabeth, with declaration of his unfeigned assent to the same."[40] Similar to the clergy, the leaders of the universities would be required to make the same subscription, demanding that each "in the presence of his fellow scholars… subscribe unto the nine-and-thirty Articles of Religion… and unto the said book, and declare his unfeigned assent and consent, and approbation of, the said Articles, and of the same book."[41]

In making these statements, Charles II's uniformity act harkens back to the Elizabethan statutes and follows a trajectory that runs through the other statements discussed throughout this essay. The clergy were required to give public and sincere subscription to the *Articles*, as they were a binding doctrinal authority and a genuine confession of the faith for the Church of England. While laity were not required to publicly subscribe to the *Articles*, the requirements given to the clergy were intended to protect the laity from false teaching and ensure unity of doctrine within the church.

CONCLUSION

The evidence from primary sources, then, makes a clear case that between 1571 and 1662, the *Thirty-Nine Articles* did function as an authoritative confession of faith within the Church of England. The ecclesial authorities who created, implemented, and received the *Articles* did indeed intend for them to function as a binding statement on Anglican belief and practice, and were willing to enforce it. These early years of the Anglican tradition admit to no flexibility in this standard. This examination reveals a clearer picture of the historic Anglican tradition regarding the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Claims suggesting that the Church of England never possessed any doctrinal confession do not correspond to the historical data. Furthermore, this study moves the contemporary debate beyond anachronistic theological posturing and allows for more substantive dialogue concerning how the *Articles* should function today in light of the tradition.

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36. Toon, "The Articles and Homilies," 136.

37. Anthony Milton, "Unsettled Reformations, 1603–1662," in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume 1: Reformation and Identity, c. 1520–1662*, ed. Anthony Milton (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 63–83, 79.

38. Chad van Dixdoorn "The Westminster Assembly and Reformation of the 1640s," in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume 1: Reformation and Identity, c. 1520–1662*, ed. Anthony Milton (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 430–443, 431–433.

39. "The Uniformity Act, A.D. 1662," *Documents Illustrative of English Church History,* 600–620, 604.

40. "The Uniformity Act, A.D. 1662," 612.

41. "The Uniformity Act, A.D. 1662," 611.

ESSAYS

W. H. Auden's Prosaic Faith

STEPHEN J. SCHULER

If one were to assemble a list of well-known Christian poems in English from the end of the last millennium, one might well include verses by Gerard Manly Hopkins, G. K. Chesterton, T. S. Eliot, Richard Wilbur, and Wendell Berry, but one might be forgiven for not including a poem by one of the greatest twentieth-century poets: W. H. Auden. Like Chesterton and Eliot, Auden took some time to embrace the Christian faith as an adult, but unlike these other writers, he seldom wrote poems expressing unqualified belief in Christianity. Fifty years after his death in 1973, Auden remains familiar to the literary world, especially in New York City where he lived for many years, and he is one of the few poets whose name and work retain recognition in the popular world (in no small part thanks to the appearance of "Funeral Blues" in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*). He is far less familiar to Christian readers, however–but then Auden was not exactly the ideal image of a Christian writer. He was a chain-smoking alcoholic, a liberal/socialist, and a homosexual. And yet ~~he professed Christ~~ianity. Aside from what he called his "hiatus of unbelief" that lasted from his late teens to his early 30s, he was a regular church attender all his life. A renowned poet, he expressed his faith mainly in, quite literally, the most prosaic of ways—in the many prose pieces he wrote over the course of his life, and in quiet acts of charity that few ever heard about.

Born to a middle-class English family in 1907, Wystan Hugh Auden loved the elaborate rituals of the high-church Anglican services he attended as a boy. But in adolescence, Auden lost all interest in religion and—perhaps not coincidentally—discovered sex and decided to become a poet. After taking his third-class degree from Oxford, Auden taught high-school English while trying to establish himself as a professional poet. He was enthusiastic about cutting-edge ideas, from communism to psychoanalysis, and his poems were often seductively cryptic in their imagery. They were full of airplanes and secret agents, and their language reflected Auden's wide-ranging interests, from psychology to geology to Anglo-Saxon verse. It was also not difficult to detect a homoerotic undertone in many of his poems—if one knew what to look for. In the politically heated climate of the 1930s, he seemed to be the voice of a new generation that was thoroughly modern, undermining authoritarianism, standing on the right side of history, and definitely not religious.

Then, in January 1939, Auden settled in New York City. He had found no place for himself in England and had spent much time abroad. He had lived in Germany and visited Iceland, and spent some weeks in Spain supporting the communists against Franco. Although he later recalled that he had been shocked that Spain's churches were all closed, he was confident at the time that he was done with religion. Now he was returning from China where he had been working on a travel-book about the Second Sino-Japanese war. Having landed in New York, Auden made himself at home, and in the spring of that year, he fell in love with an American college student, Chester Kallman. Auden, it seems, quickly pledged fidelity to Kallman, and he and Auden spent the summer together on a road trip to California celebrating what Auden was calling a "honeymoon." Auden hoped that the relationship, which he privately considered a marriage, would smooth the rough edges of his personality, as well as provide him with the domestic stability he craved.

Then the Nazis invaded Poland. Though Auden was now living an ocean away in America, he was personally shaken. He quickly wrote a poem, "September 1, 1939," in which he acknowledged the capacity for evil in every human heart but cautiously hoped to "show an affirming flame" in the midst of political darkness. That November, in a New York movie theater, Auden saw a newsreel about the Nazi invasion, and he was horrified when several people in the German-speaking audience began to scream, "Kill them!" at the Poles on the screen. Years later, Auden recalled that "the novelty and shock of the Nazis was that they made no pretense of believing in justice and liberty for all….Confronted by such a phenomenon, it was impossible any longer to believe that the values of liberal humanism were self-evident." Auden found himself asking, "If, as I am convinced, the Nazis are wrong and we are right, what is it that validates our values and invalidates theirs?"[1]

Furthermore, if the arc of history did not bend inexorably toward political peace and human equality, what was its real direction? And just as importantly, what was the place of a poet in it? Auden set out to survey the intellectual history of Europe and to put his own struggles in context. The result was a long poem he called "New Year Letter," which occupied him for much of the spring of 1940 and which hints at a return to the Christian faith. Auden had begun reading books by Christian authors, beginning with Charles Williams's *The Descent of the Dove*, an eccentric but insightful account of the history of Christianity. Auden would go on to read Augustine's *Confessions* and a number of Kierkegaard's works. He devoured a now-forgotten book by Charles Norris Cochrane called *Christianity and Classical Culture*. He also discovered Reinhold Niebuhr and eventually Martin Buber's book *I and Thou*. All of these authors made a profound and lasting impression on him.

Soon Auden's housemates in New York City noticed that he was slipping away every Sunday morning in order to attend a local Episcopalian church. He went to the early service, where there was no homily. He wanted liturgy, not preaching. Evidently there had been no sudden conversion experience, only a steady intellectual movement from skepticism to tentative belief—and just as importantly for Auden, the restoration of regular religious practice.

But just as the rise of the Nazis had shocked Auden out of his intellectual confidence, so Chester Kallman soon shocked Auden out of his domestic confidence. In the summer of 1941, Auden discovered that Kallman was cheating on him with another man. As it turned out, Kallman (who was 14 years Auden's junior) had not really intended to remain permanently monogamous, as Auden had. Auden was enraged, and later he hinted that at one point he had seriously contemplated murdering Kallman. Instead, however, he spent the rest of the year trying to come to terms with what had happened to him.

Elements of Auden's personal crises energized his poetry of the early 1940s. In 1941, Auden started an ambitious poetic project, a Christmas oratorio called "For the Time Being," which he intended to be set to music by his acquaintance Benjamin Britten. The finished piece ended up far too long to be sung, but it is one of

1. W.H. Auden, untitled essay in the edited volume *Modern Canterbury Pilgrims*, reprinted in *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose, Vol. III, 1949-1955*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 279.

the most explicitly religious poems Auden ever wrote. His idea was to depict the characters in the Nativity story as if the event were happening in the present day, such that the magi are depicted as scientists, Simeon as a philosopher, and the shepherds as factory workers. But despite his occasional forays into playwriting throughout his life, Auden had little talent for dramatic storytelling, and his characters are often little more than ideas in costume.

Yet the poem contains some memorable passages. One is a verse dialogue between Joseph and the chorus, in which Joseph struggles to accept what appears to be Mary's infidelity. Joseph begs God for an explanation:

> All I ask is one
> Important and elegant proof
> That what my Love had done
> Was really at your will
> And that your will is Love.

The reply Joseph gets from an angel is a simple assertion of the necessity of faith: "No, you must believe; / Be silent, and sit still." The passage is widely read as an expression of Auden's own emotional devastation at his discovery of Kallman's infidelity, and Auden certainly sympathized with Joseph's plight.

Auden also put much of himself into a passage spoken by King Herod in prose. The piece begins as a pastiche of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic Roman emperor who persecuted the early church. Herod, like Joseph, is dismayed at the news of a miraculous birth, but for an entirely different reason. Herod has spent his career doggedly trying to civilize his superstitious people, and now the notion of God being born threatens to undermine his rationalist utopia. He regretfully concludes that the military must be called in to eliminate the threat.

Auden, like Herod, had a taste for grand organizational schemes based on abstract ideas, and he also had a tyrannical streak. An inveterate formalist, Auden described his approach to writing poetry as dictatorial. Whole stanzas might be deported to some other poem, while words that did not belong had to be ruthlessly liquidated. But Auden could be tyrannical in life, too, and he may have felt that his attempts to establish a domestic utopia by controlling Kallman had finally pushed his partner away. In Herod, Auden acknowledges his own capacity to excuse any number of evils on the grounds that he just wants everyone to act rationally.

In the years that followed his writing of "For the Time Being," Auden continued to attend church, but his poetry moved on to other topics. Yet a few of his most notable post-conversion lyrics are energized by the problems posed by his faith. His 1958 poem "Friday's Child," dedicated to the memory of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, expresses dismay at the mystery of human free will—why God in the person of Christ would willingly become the silent victim of the evil he allows. "In Praise of Limestone," written in 1948, ponders the significance of a limestone landscape, which the speaker concludes is a sign of the future possibility of "a faultless love/Or the life to come," which the poet admits he knows nothing of as yet. These poems have often been read as expressions of doubt, but while they avoid dogmatic assertion, they also avoid denial. They may be read as expressions of faith—belief in what cannot be seen or proven, but what is nevertheless acknowledged as real in some mysterious way.

Although Auden identified himself as a Christian, it is not always clear what exactly he meant by it. His milieu was a time of serious intellectual objections to Christianity, and he generally subscribed to a liberal, mid-century Protestantism that emphasized the moral teachings of Jesus but could do without most or all of the miraculous elements of the Bible. Yet Auden never flatly denied such doctrines as the Virgin Birth or the bodily resurrection of Christ, even though he had every opportunity to do so.

Whenever the question of the Virgin Birth was raised, for example, Auden would merely quip that everyone believes in a virgin birth, for nobody can imagine his or her own parents having sex. It would be unwise to read too much into a joke either way, but the punchline is aimed as much at skeptics as at believers. Ironic deflection can be a way of concealing either doubt or belief. And after all, as Alan Jacobs has pointed out, Auden did say explicitly that he believed in such mira-

cles as the Virgin Birth and Christ's resurrection every time he recited the creed in church. Yet the recorded statements we have from him are neither unambiguous affirmations nor clear denials. What exactly he might have privately meant by "I believe" remains something of a mystery.

The great challenge to Auden's personal faith was, of course, his homosexuality–and this is likewise the greatest challenge for orthodox Christian readers of his work. Auden's friend Christopher Isherwood famously remarked that "his religion condemned it and he agreed that it was sinful, though he fully intended to go on sinning." Auden's biographer Humphrey Carpenter adds "this is a simplification, but is in essence true."[2] Auden's 1948 poem "The Love Feast" encapsulates his conflict between faith and sex, in which sex generally won out. The poem describes a party scene couched ironically in church language:

> In an upper room at midnight
> See us gathered on behalf
> Of love according to the gospel
> Of the radio-phonograph.

Amid drunken love triangles and their attendant griefs, the poet reflects that "The Love that rules the sun and stars/Permits what He forbids." The speaker knows he ought to leave, yet he succumbs once again to temptation:

> But that Miss Number in the corner
> Playing hard to get. . . .
> I am sorry I'm not sorry . . .
> Make me chaste, Lord, but not yet.

The "Miss Number" is, in Auden's parlance, a gay man with whom he wants to hook up. This person has no name but is merely a number—just one more body in a long list of sexual encounters.

There had been a moment in the early 1940s, just as he was regaining his faith, that Auden had aspired to ascend the *scala amoris*—the ladder of love—with Chester Kallman. He thought he might redeem his erotic love by translating it into divine, *agape* love after the manner of Dante while retaining the privilege of regular physical gratification, and he had hoped to settle into a cozy, domestic life with Kallman as his spouse. But when this proved impossible, he went back to the short-term sexual relationships that had characterized his earlier years, and he no longer hoped or wished to find someone with whom he could be intimate both sexually and intellectually. Nor did he make any attempt to reconcile his homosexuality with his faith; he merely lived with the conflict between them.

While it cannot serve as an excuse, it is important to understand Auden's sexuality by placing it in the context of his entire temperament. He had always lived at some distance from his body. Although his mind craved order of every kind, he did not seem to know how to bring order to his own physical existence. Despite his love of tidy intellectual categories, he neglected his personal hygiene, his clothes were often soiled, and his living quarters were famously squalid. He was temperamentally inclined to compulsions—he was, for example, compulsively punctual and had rigid routines for both work and social life. He was also addicted to tobacco, alcohol, and amphetamines, so sex was one one vice among many, albeit his most grievous. Compulsions and addictions are common ways of dealing with a chaotic life. Although he knew these were all coping mechanisms, he enjoyed all of them to a great extent, and probably never truly reckoned with how unhealthy–or spiritually deadly–they really were.

If it is disappointing that Auden never practiced sexual self-denial after he embraced Christianity, it is also surprising that he never wavered in his religious commitments. It would not have been out of character for him to drift away from his faith. He had already dabbled in other, more avant-guard worldviews as a young man, having been a brief follower of D. H. Lawrence, and then of Marx, before settling on Christianity. Perhaps in the 1940s some readers wondered when Auden was going to end his Christian phase and move on to something more modern. In an intellectual climate in which French existentialism was just coming into vogue, Auden had every reason to find a life-philosophy better suited to his personal habits than Chris-

2. Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden: A Biography* (London: Houghton, 1981) 299.

tianity. Yet he remained a professing Christian for the rest of his life.

Although he said little about his personal faith in his poems, he became ever more explicit about his theological commitments in his prose. A good deal of Auden's income came from his lectures, essays, and book reviews, and he often griped that he was paid far less for writing poems than he was for giving talks about writing poetry. But he had to pay his bills, so he wrote thousands of pages of prose, and one can hardly read more than two or three of Auden's post-conversion essays without running across explicit references to Christian theology, liturgy, church history, the Bible, or the creeds.

There are, however, only a few prose pieces in which Auden discloses the more personal elements of his own faith, especially his personal history and his conversion, but also his frustrated struggles with some of the moral demands of Christianity. In 1955, Auden contributed an essay to a book titled *Modern Canterbury Pilgrims*, a collection of essays by converts to the Church of England. Auden concludes the essay by insisting on the value of embodied liturgical practice for individual faith: "it is with this body, with faith or without it, that all good works are done….It is easy to forget, particularly if I do not wish to remember, what I thought or felt yesterday, but it is difficult to forget what I did. Even mere routine has its value, as a reminder."[3] The routines of liturgy very much appealed to Auden's desire for order, as well as for punctuality, but liturgy also challenged Auden's natural inclination toward a merely cerebral mode of existence. It forced him to express his faith with his body, which was never easy for him.

Although Auden disliked sermons, he was asked to take the pulpit himself at least twice, once at Oxford in 1965 where he gave a short, philosophical talk entitled "Words and the Word," and again at Westminster Abbey in 1966, where he gave something more like a real homily about the struggle between flesh and spirit as described in Romans 8. Auden's main point is difficult to encapsulate, but he identifies "the flesh" not with biological existence as such, nor with an inborn propensity toward sin, but with human society and culture of all kinds, the social systems into which we are born and in which we are more or less interchangeable pieces. He associates "the law of the flesh" with the super-ego, the socially-constructed censor that condemns each person from within.[4] In contrast, the "law of the Spirit" is, in Auden's mind, the command to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves, treating people as unique persons like ourselves rather than as interchangeable social units. Doing so requires faith that every other person is uniquely valuable, just like ourselves. And for Auden, doing good for other people is the primary way in which we show love for God. Auden maintains that the root of all sins against God and against neighbor is pride, which Auden defines as treating another person as if that person were an object without a unique personhood like oneself.

Auden concluded that "Those of us who have the nerve to call ourselves Christians will do well to be extremely reticent on this subject. Indeed, it is almost the definition of a Christian that he is somebody who knows he isn't one, either in faith or morals." Auden urges his audience to ask, "given our time and place and talents, what, if our faith and love were perfect, would we be glad to find it obvious to do?"

Auden often answered that question himself in ways that even his closest friends knew nothing about. In an essay titled "The Secret Auden," Auden's literary executor Edward Mendelson details some of them.[5] Auden once supplied funds to pay for an expensive surgery for a fellow parishioner in New York. He arranged to pay schooling costs for a number of European children orphaned by WWII. He kept up long, generous correspondences with people who wrote to him—including people in prison. When a homeless shelter run by Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker organization was threatened with closure for violating fire codes, Auden

3. Auden, untitled essay in *Modern Canterbury Pilgrims*, 279.

4. W.H. Auden, "A Sermon Delivered in Westminster Abbey," in appendix to *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose, Vol. V, 1963-1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 436-442.

5. Edward Mendelson, "The Secret Auden", *New York Review of Books*, 20 March 2014, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/03/20/secret-auden/.

accosted Day on the street in front of the shelter. Day recalled later that he was so poorly dressed that she thought he was a panhandler. But instead of asking for money, he pressed a check into her hand muttering, "here's two-fifty" and walked away. She assumed he meant $2.50 and thought it was nice of a stranger to make a small donation to the shelter. Then she saw that the check was for $250, enough to pay the fine.

This disposition toward secretive charity explains why he so seldom wrote openly about his faith in his poetry. Auden felt that personal faith was not really a suitable subject for poems—at least as far as he was concerned as a professional poet. In a collection of reflections called "Postscript: Christianity & Art," printed in *The Dyer's Hand*, Auden asserted that

> "To a Christian, the godlike man is not the hero who does extraordinary deeds, but the holy man, the saint, who does good deeds. But the gospel defines a good deed as one done in secret, hidden, so far as it is possible, even from the doer, and forbids private prayer and fasting in public. This means that art, which by its nature can only deal with what can and should be manifested, cannot portray a saint."[6]

Later in the same essay, Auden articulates his discomfort with explicitly religious literature: "poems, like many of Donne's and Hopkins's, which express a poet's personal feelings of religious devotion or penitence, make me uneasy.…Is there not something a little odd, to say the least, about making an admirable public object out of one's feelings of guilt and penitence before God?" This is not to say that there is no value in reading such poems, but Auden is speaking as a writer. He, at any rate, could not bring himself to make an artistic object for public display out of his private faith, and he strongly believed that he would have betrayed his own moral standards had he done so.

Auden strenuously denied that art has ultimate significance in itself. Writers like Shelley and Yeats had envisioned their own art as oracular, the new scriptures for a new age, but Auden saw such a Romantic exaltation of art as incompatible with Christianity. He observed that polytheistic societies like ancient Greece revered poets as divine oracles, just as modern societies have come to regard their scientists as sources of infallible truth. "To a Christian, unfortunately," Auden said, "both art and science are secular activities, that is to say, small beer."[7]

Auden was forthright about the conflict he perceived between his vocation as a poet and his faith as a Christian: "A poet who calls himself a Christian cannot but feel uncomfortable when he realizes that the New Testament contains no verse…, only prose." Auden notes with dismay that the style of the New Testament is characterized by prosaic directness, and by clear proclamation. Even its most literary passages—the parables—are in prose. Auden concludes by saying, "I hope there is an answer to this objection, but I don't know what it is."[8] Fortunately for the Christian poet, Auden had overlooked some facts. The New Testament *does* contain some passages in verse. The Book of Revelation contains several songs, and the epistles quote passages from the Psalms. Most importantly, in Luke 2 there are two complete poems, the Song of Zechariah and (how could Auden have forgotten it?) Mary's *Magnificat*. Poetry is easier to spot in today's Bibles, in which verse passages are lineated, whereas the older Bibles used to print the entire text as prose. Perhaps Auden overestimated the conflict between faith and poetry, at least as far as the New Testament goes. Yet he offers a valuable warning that great art should never be mistaken for great faith, and that faith is not best expressed in poetic utterance but in the small, prosaic acts of everyday charity that usually fail to attract the notice of a critic or a biographer.

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6. W.H. Auden, "Postscript: Christianity & Art" in *The Dyer's Hand* (London: Vintage, 1989), 457.

7. Auden, "Postscript: Christianity & Art", 456.

8. Auden, "Postscript: Christianity & Art", 459.

Meeting

BY TOLU OGUNLESI

Since death, he has changed
clothes, borrowed a limp, ill-fitting,
and a pace to match,
no longer a man
of speed. Evening descends
like a memory, bursting from
whatever dam held it.
Grief: always a bastard.

The dead walk
however they wish
sit beneath trees
light menthol cigarettes
and then wisp away
They also turn their backs a lot
leave us guessing; appointments
not made, but kept, questions
not asked, not answered.

If they wave
it is from instinct
and if they linger
it is to leaven hope.
If we care
we let them be,
quietly picking
our new places.

BOOKS AND ARTS

Staging Luther: Four Plays by Hans Sachs[1]

REVIEWED BY J. C. SCHARL

The difficulty in reviewing polemical art well is the same as the difficulty of making it well: not to mistake agreement or disagreement for a realistic assessment of the work's quality. In reviewing this new translation of the plays of the pro-Luther German playwright Hans Sachs (1494-1576), I have chosen not to engage much with the theological arguments of the plays. In the last five hundred years, there have doubtless been more compelling theological discussions of these plays than I could offer. What I offer here is a look at these plays as art, which leads us to the adjacent question: can literature aspire to artistic excellence when it is explicitly polemical?

Hans Sachs was a poet and playwright in Germany during the heady early days of the Reformation. An early and staunch defender of Lutheranism, Sachs turned his craft to penning plays that are really arguments, in which a clever, humble Protestant (usually a craftsman or artisan, not a scholar) defeats a series of Catholic interlocutors using logic and the Scriptures. Sachs displays a careful knowledge of Scripture and his characters ably expose the typical Reformation-era Catholic excesses and foibles of their opponents. These plays served the Reformation cause in cultural capitals like Nuremberg, giving (often less educated) Protestants a crash-course in how to defend their new cause. At first glance, these plays appear to be essentially vehicles for argumentation. "A Disputation," the first play, pits a Protestant shoemaker against a Catholic parson. Unsurprisingly, the shoemaker dismantles all the parson's arguments with rapid-fire Scriptural quotations, and in the process exposes the parson's own ignorance of Scripture.

But Sachs did not write simply to win arguments; as the editorial team points out in the essay titled, "The Impact of Hans Sachs' Reformation Writings, "Sachs' wish for the [Reformation] movement was more on the individual than the church itself… The new freedom of the Christian was a spiritual freedom, not a political freedom." Sachs chose to write plays, not trea-

1. *Staging Luther: Four Plays by Hans Sachs.* Translated and edited by Annis N. Shaver, Ian A. MacPahail-Fausey, Clara G. Hendrickson, Robert Kolb. Fortress Press, 2023. Paperback. 233 pp. $32.

tises or even solely philosophical poems (the volume includes a new translation of his poem "The Wittenberg Nightingale," whose pure polemics provide a nice contrast to the plays). So the question we must ask is this: why did Sachs write plays? Was it simply for convenience or polemics, or did he have a literary purpose for this choice?

THE WRITER OF PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUES (WHETHER THEY ARE FULL-FLEDGED PLAYS OR SIMPLY DIALOGUES LIKE PLATO'S) IS INTERESTED IN MORE THAN LOGICAL ARGUMENTS.

For millennia, the form of the dialogue has stood right alongside the treatise as a key tool in philosophical (and theological) inquiry. Plato's are the best-known philosophical dialogues, but there is a wider unbroken tradition of couching philosophical arguments in such a form. This is actually very odd. Why would someone who is trying to lay out an argument bog himself down in dialogue—and in dramatic dialogue at that? Why give himself all the extra work of creating characters, writing little witty asides, and giving stage directions, if his main purpose is simply to make a point?

The answer, of course, is that making a point is not his main purpose. The writer of philosophical dialogues (whether they are full-fledged plays or simply dialogues like Plato's) is interested in more than logical arguments (though they are generally quite interested in those). He is interested in making a moral argument. If, the writer of philosophical dialogue says, this line of thinking is true (and he will attempt to show that it is), how then should we live?

A philosophical or theological play, by choosing to be a play instead of a treatise, must succeed not only in its theoretical ambitions but also in its moral ones: it must "make its point," but it must also sketch out—perhaps in negative—what our conduct ought to be in response to that point. The best philosophical dramas will do both of these things at once, in perfect harmony, so that the argumentation does not dominate the drama. That is, in essence, the "art" of philosophical drama. Excellence in that art results in a watchable, engaging drama in which the logical argument advances along with the moral argument—the acted-out, embodied argument.

So, with all that in mind, do the plays of Hans Sachs demonstrate excellence in the art of philosophical drama? The reality is that on the page, the argumentation dominates; there is often page after page of back-and-forth quibbling about interpretations of Scripture or about actual practices within the Catholic Church. I was not, of course, able to see the plays staged, but in reading passages aloud, I can see how a live performance would transform the material (though certain jokes shine even in print, like when a bested Catholic priest grumbles that "Neither Christ nor Paul could have gotten rid of him [a Protestant] in three days, he puts so much faith in them."

It is clear to see how the plays are set up to instruct common folk in how to use Scripture within arguments; the Protestant heroes all pull effortlessly from across the entire Bible (not, of course, the books of the Apocrypha), leaping effortlessly from Ezekiel to Exodus to Matthew.

On the page, it can look like the Protestants are spilling out passages memorized rote, and the Catholic stereotype of ignorance of Scripture certainly gets full play, as in this exchange,

> Parson: Cook, bring me the big old book.
>
> Cook: Lord, is this it?
>
> Parson: No, that is the decrees: don't confuse me.
>
> Cook: Lord, is this it?
>
> Parson: Yes, brush off the dust and cobwebs.

But Sachs is not simply calling his Protestant audience to memorize Scripture. His heroes' facility with Scripture extends beyond simply using biblical passages; Sachs' heroes also exegete with ease, correcting the hapless Catholics' interpretations. For example, when the Parson in "A Disputation" tries to use the Gospel of Matthew to further his own argument ("Judge not

lest you be judged"), the Shoemaker swiftly responses, "Reprimanding and judging are two different things […] as God speaks to the prophet in Isaiah 58: "Cry out, don't stop, raise your voice like a trumpet to announce to my people their misdeeds."

This is not merely a battle of Bible verse vs. Bible verse, but an interesting examination of the internal contradictions that seem to appear within Scripture. What exactly are we to do when confronted by the sins of others? These are not straightforward questions, and Sachs is generous in his attention to them, allowing the back-and-forth around minute interpretative differences to spin out as long as is needed (probably far beyond the attention span of many contemporary playgoers).

But what about the moral argument? What moral attitude is Sachs seeking to inspire in his audience? Curiously, it is an attitude of charity and respect for opponents—not, perhaps, the attitude that springs to mind when we think about discourse in the Reformation. Make no mistake; Sachs' characters throw insults with the best of them, but his Protestant characters are marked by an earnest desire for their opponents to find peace with God. The other characters display a range of attitudes; the Catholic parson is lazy, gluttonous, and vindictive, while a Franciscan monk is shown to be genuine but deeply misguided. Throughout, however, Sachs uses the dialogue form to model how he believes Protestants should interact with those who disagree with them.

The most interesting dialogue in the book is the second, "A Discussion on the Public Works of the Spiritual Person and Their Vows," in which two Protestants—Hans, a shoemaker, and Peter, a baker—converse with Franciscan monks who have come to beg for candles. The monks' sin, unlike the sin of the Parson, is that they believe that by following St. Francis and doing public works of charity, they are following Christ. By the end of the dialogue, one of the monks says that he will think more on what Peter and Hans have told him. This ending underscores Sachs' two-fold purpose with the plays: first, to impress upon his audience that salvation is a matter of a changed heart and individual faith in Christ, and second, to model for them how their lives and words can become the means of encouraging others towards that faith.

So the question stands: do the plays succeed as literature, or are they simply too polemical? I found that in more than a few sections, the dialogue functions rather obviously as a vehicle for a message (priests are wicked, monks are greedy, etc.). These plays exist to advocate for institutional change, and that is a challenging undertaking for an artist; it is all too easy to become lazy, to rely upon stereotypes and generalizations, rather than to create the kinds of imaginative, complex characters and situations we find in real life. Sachs does this task as well as we could expect him to, and delivers many a crushing argument against the corruption and hegemony of the sixteenth century Catholic Church.

The plays, however, do a difficult thing, in that they rise above their own call for institutional change. Each play leaves the reader (or viewer, I expect) with the sense that, underneath all the arguments, debates, invectives, scriptural quotations, disagreements on interpretation, there is a crucial thing: a transformative individual relationship with Christ. These plays are not just intellectual arguments, but moral ones, and as moral arguments, Protestant and Catholic readers alike will find them compelling. Sachs' work reminds us that the task of convincing others relies far more on who we are—and what we love—than on the arguments we make. In a culture where debates often degenerate into shouting matches relying on completely different sets of facts, Sachs' reminder could not be timelier.

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BOOKS AND ARTS

The Gospel of J. Edgar Hoover: How the FBI Aided and Abetted the Rise of White Christian Nationalism[1]

BY LERONE A. MARTIN
REVIEWED BY BRIAN AUTEN

These are banner years for unveiling the ways in which US government entities served as "culture makers" during the Cold War. Many books have focused on the US government's efforts to influence culture outside of the US–particularly the instrumental (or "ideologized") use of culture for purposes of fighting communism. Some studies include: the CIA's influence on postwar Western European intellectual circles,[2] or its clandestine distribution of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* inside the Soviet Union;[3] the multi-US agency role in overt and clandestine international broadcasting;[4] the State Department's use of "jazz diplomacy" in decolonization-era Africa;[5] and an ostensible Cold War application of "dual use" anthropology.[6]

1. *The Gospel of J. Edgar Hoover: How the FBI Aided and Abetted the Rise of White Christian Nationalism* by Lerone A. Martin. Princeton University Press, 2023. 353pp. $29.95.

2. See, for example, Frances Stonor Saunders' *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (The New Press, 2013); Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (The Free Press, 1989); Duncan White, *Cold Warriors: Writers Who Waged the Literary Cold War* (Custom House, 2019)

3. Peter Finn and Petra Couvee's *The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book* (Pantheon, 2014)

4. Mark Pomar's *Cold War Radio: The Russian Broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (Potomac Books, 2022); Richard Cummings' *Radio Free Europe's 'Crusade for Freedom': Rallying Americans Behind Cold War Broadcasting, 1950-1960* (McFarland, 2010); Cummings *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950-1989* (McFarland and Company, 2009); Cummings, *Cold War Frequencies: CIA Clandestine Radio Broadcasting to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (McFarland, 2021); Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (University Press of Kentucky, 2000)

5. Keith Hatschek's *The Real Ambassadors: Dave and Iola Brubeck and Louis Armstrong Challenge Segregation* (University Press of Mississippi, 2022); Lisa Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (University Press of Mississippi, 2013); Penny Von Eschen's *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2006)

6. David Price, *Cold War Anthropology: The CIA, the Pentagon, and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology* (Duke University Press, 2016); Price, *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* (Duke University Press, 2008)

By comparison, religion has been under-assessed as one aspect of instrumentalized Cold War culture. Studies in this area are beginning to appear however, among them Lerone Martin's *The Gospel of J. Edgar Hoover: How the FBI Aided and Abetted the Rise of White Christian Nationalism*, which tells the story of "the [FBI's] embrace and promotion of faith" (7). The book begins with a look at Hoover's very personal, early-to-mid twentieth century Presbyterianism, and yet how, beginning in the early 1940s, Hoover found a combination of Catholic Social Teaching's anticommunism and both the rigor of Easter Mass celebration and yearly Jesuit-run lay retreats effective in fostering a sense of personal spirituality, vocational pride, organizational cohesion, and civic responsibility among Catholic FBI special agents and their families. Martin then describes how a combination of the desire for denominational fairness within the Bureau, and growing public Protestant fears over "Catholic influence" in the FBI by the mid-to-late 1950s eventually precipitated the identification of Hoover-approved Protestant venues for a yearly FBI family event; a turn by Hoover to Protestant neo-evangelicals as a theologically acceptable route for Christian anticommunist public messaging; and, importantly, a three-part series of popular articles by Hoover himself in *Christianity Today* in the weeks preceding the 1960 presidential election.

The latter half of Martin's book addresses how Hoover's 1960 *Christianity Today* series led to regular socio-political-focused contributions to the magazine, and how Hoover and Hoover's FBI became a religious content producer and theological watchdog of sorts–particularly for the growing number of white Protestant evangelicals worried about the anticommunist "soundness" of their own denominations and leaders. Martin describes how Hoover's relationship to various FBI-friendly clergy, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), and the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) turned Hoover into "white evangelicalism's revivialist-in-chief" and a "solider-saint" (219) against theological liberalization–whether perceived or actual. Martin then concludes with an extended look at how Hoover's belief in himself as a key public *religious* figure, and how Hoover's (and neo-evangelicalism's) perspectives on race and social justice, affected the FBI's actions during the civil rights movement, particularly in the theological aspects of the Bureau's investigation of Martin Luther King.

In Chapter Two and the first part of Chapter Three, Martin offers a detailed look at the introduction of Catholic spiritual disciplines and practices into the FBI during the Cold War. Through his longstanding, personal friendship with Robert S. Lloyd, SJ, and his appreciation for the "Americanism" ("love of God and love of country") inculcated in Catholic higher learning, Hoover "institutionali[zed] Jesuit spirituality" within the Bureau (15; 34-35; 38). Martin initially describes the "officially voluntary but 'encouraged'" FBI retreat at Mantesa, which was originally held around Easter, with a summer session added later. Starting in the early 1940s, the retreat was administered internally by the FBI's Domestic Intelligence Division (now the Counterintelligence Division), and it compressed a standard thirty-day/four-week Ignatian spiritual exercises retreat into a single, FBI-branded and FBI-focused weekend (39-45). Starting with a Mass using the "FBI Chalice of Salvation" (48), FBI special agents not only received teaching about communism and materialism from a Catholic labor expert, but also spent time on casuistry, ordered and disordered loves, legitimate government authority, personal vocation, calling, and the financial costs of public service (49-59). The retreat's popularity was such that the FBI's cadre of non-special agent Catholics wanted something similar. This led to a yearly Lenten Mass and Communion Breakfast for employees and their families. Again organized by the FBI's Domestic Intelligence Division, the approved speakers for the Mass and the breakfast regularly emphasized the protective role of the Christian faith in democracy's fight against communism (67-84).

Eventually, the FBI's Protestant employees pushed for their own event, amid concern from church leaders about growing Catholic numbers and a possible "Catholic conspiracy" in the US government (91-95). The FBI started a Protestant Vespers Service in 1954, first hosted by National Presbyterian, Hoover's trusted home church in Washington, DC. Like the Catholic event, its focus was on "Americanism" (97). Many

Protestant churches vied for the honor of hosting, but Martin notes how Hoover determined who could be trusted with the yearly event. If Hoover viewed a church as remotely friendly toward the National Council of Churches (NCC) or if it was not seen to be holding the line on racial segregation, the chances were higher that the venue would move (88-91; 104-115).

This challenge of Protestant "soundness" was, Martin explains, a potent one for Hoover and the FBI, and precipitated Hoover's friendly and productive relationship with *Christianity Today* and neo-evangelicalism. Hoover needed Protestants who were confidently non-NCC and unwaveringly anti-communist, or who would be most likely to trend in that direction, but who did not have an existing reputation of political stridency, intractability, or simply being considered too "fringe." (124; 168; 192). The neo-evangelicals fit the bill, and beginning with the March 1958 book launch for Hoover's *Masters of Deceit: The Story of Communism in America and How to Fight It*, *Christianity Today* became one of Hoover's core go-tos for broadcasting the anti-communist message to America's growing (and increasingly Sunbelt-located) conservative evangelical faithful. Martin describes the excitement surrounding, and the praise of, Hoover's three-part *CT* series, and how the FBI continuously reprinted and disseminated those same articles across FBI field offices, to churches, social clubs, private anti-communist book studies, and in response to public queries throughout the 1960s (159-172). In the end, Hoover's neo-evangelical investment paid solid dividends–it more than outlasted the 1958-1961 heyday of the right wing "fringe" crusades[7] and Hoover ended up contributing to *Christianity Today* up through his death in 1972. Indeed, from the late 1950s onward, all the while maintaining close Catholic connections, Hoover was regularly honored by a slew of Protestant churchmen and ministries (200-219). The FBI even worked with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) to prepare college-age students for possible employment at the Bureau (223-225).

For all of the above, Martin's concluding chapter on Martin Luther King is still his most controversial. The overall contours of the FBI's early 1960s investigation of King are well known. Martin's addition to this story is three-fold: first, he explores Hoover's (and the FBI's) identification and cultivation of a "friendly" Washington, DC-area conservative black clergyman–Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux–who could serve as a public counterweight to the more theologically liberal King; second, an explanation of how Hoover's personal theology of race and social justice fit together with neo-evangelicalism's so-called "moderate" stance and also with Michaux's own positions; and third, the extent to which Michaux and the FBI cooperated to publicly criticize and delegitimize King's efforts.

In 1946, when he was picked up by WTTG-TV, Michaux, up to then a well-known religious radio personality, became America's first evangelist with a weekly televised program, and, as Martin adds, the first African American star of his own show (227). Elsewhere, Martin has described Michaux as an early religious media entrepreneur, a successful church planter, and a key revivalist.[8] Martin shares the story of how a white editor at the Washington Post "unhesitatingly" told Simeon Booker, the Washington Post's first black reporter, in 1951, that Michaux was Washington DC's "leading Negro."[9] Hoover was a documented fan. He wrote to Michaux as early as 1950, claiming to watch him "whenever [he was at] home," and in 1951, Hoover sent Michaux a telegram in celebration of his [Michaux's] twentieth anniversary in Christian broadcasting (227).

Importantly to Martin, Hoover, Michaux, and the neo-evangelical movement shared parallel theological positions on race and social justice. He describes all

7. See Hubert Villeneuve, "Teaching Anticommunism: Fred C. Schwarz, the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and American Postwar Conservatism (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, August 2011), pp. 264 (for list of "fringe" groups), 355 ("As 1960 drew to a close, more than ten Crusade schools of anticommunism had been held since 1958"), 435 ("...the wave of anticommunism that peaked in Southern California in the last month of 1961.") and all of Chapter 15 ("The Little Brown Scare")

8. Lerone Martin, "Bureau Clergyman: How the FBI Colluded with an African American Televangelist to Destroy Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr," *Religion and American Culture* (2018), Vol. 28, Issue 1, 1-51.

9. Martin, "Bureau Clergyman", 11.

three as "gradualist" and individualist–that is, the key to racial group harmony and equal civil rights between whites and blacks was to be found in the transformation, or the Christian regeneration, of an individual's heart. To Hoover, there were extremist ditches on the right (the Klan) and on the left (King), and he saw civil disobedience–whether violent or not–as nothing but anarchy. (226) Hoover argued that, eventually, African Americans would attain the same civil rights as whites, but that African Americans would have to first "prove themselves worthy" (221). For neo-evangelicals, their "moderate" approach, Martin says, was an attempted *via media* between what they saw as extremist "full integration" and "full segregation." Integration, neo-evangelicals asserted, should not be compelled or forced, and it was not necessarily in the best interest of either party due to the perceived threat of interracial romance, marriage, and children (221-222). Michaux believed similarly–God had providentially determined racial hierarchies, people of African descent were on an inferior level of "intellectual culture" than whites, and that slavery had, again in God's providence, made African-American conversion to Christianity. Through individual spiritual regeneration, "self-improvement," and white recognition of their gains over time, Michaux pictured eventual white acceptance and black mobility into the middle class. In the meantime, Michaux "[believed] everybody White, Black, Yellow, or Red [had] a definite place in life and that each should keep to their place" (226; 234; 242; 252).

Martin pegs the beginning of Michaux's collaboration with the FBI to late January 1956, about two months into the Montgomery Bus Boycott, when Michaux was approached by Louis Nichols, the FBI's chief public relations officer. As Martin describes it, Michaux agreed to help "at any time" when Nichols asked if he [Michaux] could be "[called] into service" to help the FBI quash "the ungodly revolt" (228-229). Michaux's service for the FBI kicked into gear following King's speech at the August 1963 March on Washington, and again in the months surrounding King's December 1964 acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize. Martin describes how, in September 1963, the FBI approached Michaux and, as a consequence, Michaux gave a radio address critical of King's "I Have a Dream" speech, adroitly using King's own phrasing, but nonetheless insistent that none of the pictures King painted in his speech at the Lincoln Memorial would come to fruition save through individual salvation and the *parousia*. Michaux then forwarded a transcript of his radio address directly to the White House, suggesting that King was not necessarily representative of all of Black America (232-236).[10]

According to Martin, a one-day strategy session with the Domestic Intelligence Division at FBIHQ in late December 1963 determined that the FBI needed to show that King was "unfit to serve as a minister of the gospel," and that one way to accomplish this objective was by identifying and deploying FBI-friendly ministers (236-237). Martin then describes how, between November 1964 and April 1965, Michaux had multiple meetings at FBIHQ. The first, in late November 1964, occurred in the immediate wake of the FBI's infamous "anonymous package" to King, complete with hotel audio recordings of King's affairs and sexual commentary, and a doctored blackmail letter from a purported Black Christian highlighting King's religious hypocrisy and his ministerial ineligibility. This November meeting with Michaux was part of a larger campaign to get the FBI-intercepted material about King out to the general public. The second meeting with Michaux followed a "summit" between King and Hoover at FBIHQ in December 1964. Michaux offered to write an open letter to King, demanding King apologize to Hoover for how he [King] ostensibly acted towards Hoover during their face-to-face meeting, while also highlighting the FBI's purported effectiveness in handling civil rights investigations. This open letter, based in part on official FBI documents secretly provided to Michaux, was released after King's return from accepting the Nobel Prize in Oslo, and was published in tandem with an official, "strictly confidential" two-page report summarizing King's immoral activity. The report, as Martin explains, was distributed widely across US executive branch departments and various

10. Martin argues that this latter move contributed to the overall environment that led to Attorney General Robert Kennedy's approval on October 10, 1963 for technical surveillance against King, but his evidence for this is less direct and more circumstantial (236).

government agencies (244-247). Following his open letter, Michaux pushed again for King to apologize to Hoover in a January 1965 Sunday service, brought letters of support to FBIHQ in late February 1965, and, lastly, brought church members to Baltimore in April 1965 to protest King and the SCLC. Martin highlights how, in this protest, the FBI sent special agents to protect and counter-surveil Michaux and his congregants–a privilege, Martin explains, Hoover never afforded to King and King's associates (248-252).

To conclude, I believe it is important to address what many *Ad Fontes* readers are likely to have already balked at–the question of whether "the rise of white Christian nationalism" is an accurate and/or helpful description of the phenomena at the heart of Martin's book. As one might expect, Martin is hearkening here to the current scholarship of sociologists Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry (3-6). Whitehead and Perry's concept of "Christian nationalism" is not, they have emphasized repeatedly, a nod to any specific "doctrinal orthodoxy," "personal piety," or "theological-interpretive positions," but is instead a stipulated form of ideologized culture or a "cultural framework" coded in discrete ways: namely, Protestant, white, nativist, and politically and socially conservative.[11] Whitehead and Perry have also cited Rogers Brubaker's "civilizational Christianity" or "identitarian Christianism" as kindred concepts, both of which Brubaker describes as "[invocations of] Christianity as a cultural and civilizational identity, characterized by putatively shared values that have little or nothing to do with religious belief or practice."[12] In Martin's words, "white Christian nationalism" is "[the merging of Jesus] with American notions of whiteness, virulent anti-communism, capitalism, hypermasculinity, and political conservatism" (3) and "the impulse to make whiteness and conservative Christianity the foundation and guidepost of American governance and culture" (4).

Martin's book, therefore, is about Hoover and the FBI's participation in the creation of a Cold War ideology, or, as he phrases it, it is a "[chronicle of] how [Hoover's white Christian forces] partnered with white evangelicals to aid and abet" that ideology's rise (4). This theoretical-cartographical approach is, of course, retrospective, and, while valid, it has certain limitations. It is indisputable, for instance, that the FBI was a dominantly white organization in the early-to-mid-Cold War. It is also indisputable that Protestants, particularly evangelicals, were a dominantly white demographic in the same period. It is tricky, though, to discern from the evidence offered whether the subjects of Martin's book themselves, at the time, saw their actions in terms of intentional ideology construction and promulgation ("white Christian nationalism"), or rather, as completely non-ideoloigized disagreements and fears over doctrine, piety, and theology–that is, the very things Whitehead and Perry's approach stipulate as being outside of their definition. As discussed above, Hoover had strong theological views, as did a number of his ghostwriting and non-ghostwriting subordinates, and that theology *mattered* when it came to the churches and clergy the FBI considered friendly and "sound." It also *mattered* for how Hoover and the FBI conceptualized race, social justice and the overall stakes of the civil rights movement. In the end, Martin's case is, I believe, a very strong one when it comes to the fact and extent of Hoover's and the FBI's dissemination of Christian anticommunism in the intentional influence of domestic American culture; it is not as clear as to whether the intended goal of said influence was what Whitehead, Perry, and Martin have in mind when it comes to the cultural framework of "white Christian nationalism."

11. Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), xix-xx, xxi, 10.

12. White and Perry, *Taking America Back for God*; also see Rogers Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationalism: The European populist moment in Comparative Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 8 (2017), pp. 1191-1226. See version available online at https://dl1.cuni.cz/pluginfile.php/478958/mod_resource/content/1/Brubaker_Between_Nationalism_and_Civilizationism.pdf, pdf pages 13-14, 17.

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Christian Heresy, James Joyce, and the Modernist Literary Imagination: Reinventing the Word[1]

BY GREGORY ERICKSON
REVIEWED BY RICHARD RANKIN RUSSELL

Theologically-oriented literary criticism on James Joyce has experienced something of a renaissance in recent years. Fr. Colum Power's *James Joyce's Catholic Categories* (Wiseblood) appeared in 2016, followed shortly after by Chrissie van Mierlo's *James Joyce and Catholicism: The Apostate's Wake* (Bloomsbury, 2017). Michael Mayo's *James Joyce and the Jesuits* (OUP) appeared in 2020 and my own *James Joyce and Samaritan Hospitality: Postcritical and Postsecular Reading in* Dubliners and Ulysses (Edinburgh) was published in 2023. Power recovered Joyce's interest in Catholicism through a thorough-going analysis of relatively unexplored aspects of Irish Catholicism that consistently retained Joyce's interest, while Van Mierlo focused on Joyce's apostasy (crucially different from seeing him as heretic) in his final, experimental novel, *Finnegans Wake*. And, to name just two, there are significant chapter-length studies on Joyce and religion in recent monographs such as Lynne Hinojosa's *Puritanism and Modernist Novels* (Ohio State, 2015), and Steven Pinkerton's *Blasphemous Modernism: The 20th-Century Word Made Flesh* (Oxford, 2017). My own thinking about Joyce and religion has been greatly influenced by a slightly older critical study, Roy Gottfried's ground-breaking *Joyce's Misbelief* (Florida, 2008), which shows how, beginning with his transcription of the Book of Revelation at age 16, Joyce often tried to explore Protestant conceptions of Scripture over against the magisterium of the Catholic Church in order both to critique what he saw as a repressive faith (a particularly virulent strain of Jansenism prevailed in the Irish Catholic Church during his time) and to reimagine his role as an artist. Collectively, these titles not only betoken a revived interest in Joyce and religion as part of the literary-critical turn to religion in the last fifteen years but also they suggest how Joyce reappropriated and reimagined compelling Scriptural doctrines and narratives, such as the Good Samaritan parable, for his own artistic ends.

1. *Christian Heresy, James Joyce, and the Modernist Literary Imagination: Reinventing the Word* by Gregory Erickson. London: Bloomsbury, 2022. Hardback. 240pp. £85.

Gregory Erickson's *Christian Heresy, James Joyce, and the Modernist Literary Imagination* is part of Bloomsbury's well-received series, New Directions in Religion and Literature, which, along with Baylor University Press's series in religion and literature, has published many compelling titles in this burgeoning area. Erickson explores the question of Christian heresy in Joyce, but he also reads theories of heresy through Joyce's works themselves. Although the entire study is fascinating, breaking genuine new ground in Joyce studies, I found Erickson's analyses of Joyce's fiction through theological heresies more convincing than his analyses of heresies through Joyce's work. The most useful and compelling chapters for me were the fifth one, "Joyce, Medieval Heresy, and the Eucharist," and the sixth one, "Alternative Reformations: Iconoclasm and *Finnegans Wake*." The epilogue on reading the Book of Mormon and *Finnegans Wake* together is unconvincing, however. The fictitious theology of Mormonism really did not influence Joyce at all, appearing only in a couple of passing references in *Finnegans Wake* (although to be fair, that is not the thrust of this chapter). It should be pointed out to Erickson that the Church of Latter Day Saints is certainly not "a major global branch of Christianity," but an heretical cult invented by Joseph Smith in the early 1800s that explicitly denies many central tenets of Christianity including the Trinity (187).

I also wished for more than brief references to Joyce's short story collection, *Dubliners*, and for more treatment of Joyce's *Bildungsroman*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, than an early six-page discussion of that novel. Much work has been done in recent years on the relationship between *Dubliners* and the forms and ethics of Jesus' parables. Critics such as Jill Shashaty, Jack Dudley, and myself have traced the parables' narrative influence on Joyce, as well as how, despite his departure from Catholicism, Joyce's lifelong spiritual bent is reflected in his fictional portrayals of hospitality. As a founder and former president of the International Society for Heresy Studies though, Erickson is understandably more concerned with Joyce's departures from Christian orthodoxy than in any lingering Christian sympathies–yet one can't help but feel they would be mutually illuminating.

Had he wished to pursue an heretical reading of *A Portrait*, however, Erickson could have found ample room to do so by examining Joyce's fascination with three heretics: Charles Stewart Parnell, Lord Byron, and the Prince of Darkness himself—Satan! It's simply not true that "Heresy," as Erickson contends, only "*may* be in the background throughout most of *Portrait*" (19, emphasis added). Stephen Dedalaus *actively* embraces heretics and heresy beginning on the second page of the novel, when as a young Catholic boy he crosses the bright sectarian divide at that time by playing with the little Protestant girl Eileen, after which he is bizarrely told by his aunt that eagles will punish him by pulling out his eyes. Later, through his repeated identification with Parnell, Byron, and finally Satan, he steeps himself in heterodoxy, finally choosing to become something like a Satanic rebel in his aloof heresy and rejection of family, home, faith, friends, and Ireland.

Erickson argues that heresy purports "to break away from modes of thinking cemented as 'normal' by Christian orthodoxy," and he desires to "acknowledge how Western metaphysical and critical thought are linked to patriarchal Christian theology" (5). Three objections come immediately to mind here. First, Erickson neglects to note that Irish thought and faith were long conceived of as being outside the mainstream of Western thought and orthodox Christianity, in part because of the late emergence of writing on the island and also because of its island status.[2] Geographic and cultural isolation enabled the Irish to embrace a syncretistic religion that yoked Irish paganism and folk Catholicism together prior to the doctrinaire and canonical changes of the post-Famine "Devotional Revolution" (c. 1850-1880).[3] Erickson seems unaware of Joyce's interest in

2. Given its longstanding (though now rapidly collapsing) status as a staunchly Roman Catholic nation, it surprises many to know that, prior to the Reformation, Ireland was frustratingly non-conformist with regard to Rome. When William the Conqueror subdued England under a papal banner in 1066, a level of conformity came to England which its subsequent kings and bishops always struggled to extend to Ireland. It took post-Reformation oppression and the nineteenth-century Potato Famine to drive most of the nation into the arms of Rome, although the northeastern counties, with their majority-Protestant population, would eventually become the current state of Northern Ireland, which remains part of the United Kingdom.

3. Emmet Larkin first posited the theory of the Devotional Revolution in "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875," *The*

Irish folk Catholicism and indeed even of this syncretistic tradition.[4]

Secondly, Erickson displays a related tendency to use reductive phrases such as "Western literature and theology" (see page 19, instance), flattening the rich diversity of literature and theology in the Western hemisphere. Is Marquez really a "Western" writer? Or Toni Morrison? Is Mexican evangelical Protestantism "Western" in any real sense? Moreover, Erickson conceives of Christianity, founded in the Middle East, heavily shaped in North Africa, and now with its majority living in the Global South as inherently Western and "patriarchal." The aforementioned turn to religion in recent literary criticism has, still, unfortunately, not led to the banishment of such inaccurate cliches.

JOYCE PERHAPS SUGGESTS THAT HE FINDS GREATER TRUTH IN CHRIST'S PARABLE OF A STRANGER OFFERING HOSPITALITY THAN HE DID IN THE EUCHARIST.

These objections aside, Erickson's book makes valuable contributions to the continuing conversation about Joyce and particularly Christian theology, including his many fictional forays into heresy. After the opening chapter articulating his theory of Christian heresy, Joyce, and the Modernist imagination, Erickson presents a series of intriguing chapters, including a selective history of heresy; a reading of Joyce as a potential Gnostic (which seems a stretch to me given Joyce's thoroughly incarnational imagination); a compelling discussion of the lingering presence of the fourth-century heretic Arius, who haunted Joyce's theory of art; an imaginative and necessary chapter on Joyce, medieval heresy, and the eucharist; and finally a chapter on alternative Reformations in *Finnegans Wake*.

Concerning the penultimate chapter, although Erickson clearly is not an adherent to the school of "Radical Orthodoxy" articulated by Catherine Pickstock and its founder John Milbank, who have sought to recover a trinitarian ontology through a rich comprehension of the "event of the Eucharist" (Pickstock, cited on 122), he does present seriously their aims, although he notes that he believes both Joyce and Derrida use "the loss of presence itself as a space to create new, multilayered meanings" (122). This is a smart and thoughtful chapter that recognizes both negative and more positive recreations of the eucharist in almost every episode of *Ulysses*. It shows, for instance, how "Circe" is "a magical event made out of the mundane daily bread of the rest of the novel" with its "identifiably Eucharistic structure." Thus, Stephen Dedalus opens this hallucinogenic episode (its expressionistic dramatic style is both overwrought and misleading, from my point of view, for truly apprehending the characters of both Stephen and Leopold Bloom) by "chanting the introit to the Mass, just as Mulligan did on the first page," while Stephen and Lynch "continue to chant from the mass while they metaphorically characterize sex workers as baptismal waters," before the scene concludes with "a type of Black Mass" (131). However, the true climax of this episode—much more to be trusted than these blasphemous sendups of the Mass—occurs when Leopold Bloom reenacts the parable of the Good Samaritan, rescuing Stephen Dedalus after an attack by a British soldier. As he does so, he uses verbatim dialogue from Joyce's short story "Grace". By arranging the chapter thus, Joyce perhaps suggests that he finds greater truth in Christ's parable of a stranger offering hospitality than he did in the eucharist, in which he seemingly found an absence of signification. Such a view is certainly in keeping with Joyce's emphasis on a more humanist, less supernatural Christ, which he would have gained from reading secular accounts of Jesus's life such as David Strauss's *Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1835) and Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1864), as explored by Erickson in an earlier chapter (88-9). In this later chapter, Erickson's brilliant juxtaposition of "squints" (unadorned internal windows of medieval churches used by the laity to obtain glimpses of the elevated host) and rood screens represents a genuine contribution to Joyce studies. "It is this ten-

American Historical Review 77, no. 3 (June, 1972), 625-652.

4. For an articulation of Joyce's interest in folk Catholicism, see *Catholic Nostalgia in Joyce and Company* by Mary Lowe-Evans (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008). For a compelling exploration of the Irish syncretistic tradition, see *J.M. Synge and the Western Mind* by Weldon Thornton (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979).

sion—between part and whole, between fragmentation and unity—that is explored in Joyce, and screens and squints act as useful metaphors for the process of reading *Ulysses*" because these devices "*both* obstruct and enhance." Thus the entire novel "suggests fragmented glimpses of the 'real presence' seen through the blasphemy of Mulligan, the heresy of Stephen, and the Jewishness of Bloom, each offering their own incomplete versions of Catholic transubstantiation as an artistic experience" (134).

Erickson never makes this claim, but I will: much as I admire and enjoy Joyce's works, I cannot go along with his clear desire that we worship him and them. Late in his penultimate chapter, in discussing the concluding episode of *Ulysses*, "Penelope," narrated by Leopold's fleshy wife Molly Bloom, Erickson states that "Molly's chapter makes words into flesh, makes the text material." He here intimates my strong suspicion that Joyce believed we should feast forever on his own words, rather than on the words of Scripture or the eucharistic meal. This, to me, may be Joyce's most disturbing heresy. Erickson articulates this heresy further in his final chapter, "Alternative Reformations." There he argues that "in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce is recreating a type of 'scripture' that, like reading the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, or a medieval wall painting, forces us to see a text as a multi-directional discourse across history and through destruction and reconstruction rather than as a synchronic or teleological text" (165). Ingeniously, he uses his experience of reading the *Finnegans Wake* notebooks at the University of Buffalo (mostly through the lone computer on which many of them are stored because of the fragility of the pages) as the "art of poetry. As decaying objects. As scripture" (166). This is a fairly brief but very suggestive moment in this valuable study, although I cannot (and Joyce did not) concur with Erickson's concluding claim that all texts are decaying into nothingness (172). If this were really true, would Joyce have claimed about *Ulysses* that "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality?"

Joyce, although he claimed elsewhere to have the mind of a grocer's assistant with his emphasis on lists and catalogs, thought himself the high priest of literature in a line descending from Homer and Milton. He believed his literary works were radiant art that would continue to be read, argued over, and discussed forever. These continuous "events," along with the "event" of reading his work repeatedly, replace the event of the eucharist in Joyce's mind. He offers his words to the reader as secularized food and drink to nourish them. Erickson's fine book goes some way toward confirming Joyce's conviction that, although he was a heretic, he and his works would be immortal.

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