

Before & After Christendom

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"This volume is the result of a conference, entitled The Christian Second Century, which was held

between March 14th and 16th, 2013, at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), University of Cambridge. and includes bibliographical references and index.

[Christianity in the Second Century](#) shows how academic study on this critical period of Christian development has undergone substantial change over the last thirty years. The second century is often considered to be a time during which the Christian church moved relentlessly towards forms of institutionalisation and consolidated itself against so-called heretics. However, new perspectives have been brought within recent scholarship as the period has attracted interest from a variety of disciplines, including not only early Christian studies, but also ancient Judaism and the wider world of the early imperial scholarship. [Christianity in the Second Century](#) seeks to reflect this changed scholarly landscape, and with contributions from key figures in these recent re-evaluations, it aims to enrich and stimulate further discussion.

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General Index

Excerpt: What is the second century? Should we, as with other 'centuries', talk about it in terms of a long second century,' ascribing to it a period of time which goes beyond its strict mathematical limits. And how will any particular perspective on the century affect the way its length is calculated? A 'Christian' second century, for instance, may be temporally different from a 'Jewish' or 'pagan' second century.' Whatever we think of this matter, a Christian second century has been a perennial subject of interest among scholars, in particular because of its perceived transitional character which, for many, renders it a Schlüsselepoche. Conventionally, it has been presented as a time of consolidation, seen in increased institutionalization, often in the face of crises, during which the ideas of orthodoxy and heresy were honed and the inchoate authority structures of Christianity established; hence the transition is from the rather looser conception of the Christian faith witnessed in the New Testament to the more systematic articulations of belief and practice, as well as of networked structures of authority, that emerged

from the third century. Yet even this looks different if the emphasis is looking forward from the first (New Testament) century to the second, or if it is looking back from the more obviously ecclesial third century to the inchoate second.

But over the past thirty or so years, while the belief that the century is an important one has not diminished, there has been a growing awareness that this older characterization should be revised and a more complex account of this period be undertaken. This is partly due to an emerging consensus that Christianity in this period was stubbornly diverse, a view with its roots in Walter Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy* of 1934, whose real effect only came to be seen in the early 1970s and beyond.⁶ Accompanying this conviction, but also emerging from textual discoveries and the application of new theoretical insights, is the view that many of the old categories, which had become central in descriptions of the Christian second century, categories adopted from some of the second century's principal Christian writers, such as Justin and Irenaeus, needed to be revised. Terms like 'heresy' and 'orthodoxy', 'Gnosticism' and even 'Christianity' and 'Judaism' were no longer self-evident. Such terms, on this account, are constructs,⁶ the expressions of dangerously reified entities, which mask more complicated realities, among Christians (and Jews) in general, where identities were evolving and fluid, and where distinctions between groups, whether those traditionally termed heretical and orthodox, or Jew and Christian, were less clear. In such a view all texts, not least those written by individuals who later came to be associated with the orthodox, are read not as defences of a generally recognized 'deposit of faith', but as attempts, in the midst of a great and interconnected diversity, to construct one. Against such a background, made more complex by the long acknowledged lack of sources available for this period (only a fraction of the number to which Eusebius refers in his *Ecclesiastical History*), attempts to characterize the century in terms of the various components of a developing 'orthodoxy' (a view, which to varying degrees is beholden to an Irenaeus/Eusebian view of the period), confronted with intermittent crises, become much more difficult, and the construction of narratives of any kind suspect, with their tendency to teleologies of various kinds. The aim of a second-century history becomes a more

comprehensive, nuanced, inclusive account, where the old certitudes of a once apparently familiar map, delineating a story of continuities, disappear and new accounts become necessary. Such accounts need not reject narrative — indeed many continue to want to tell a story of sorts — but insofar as they embrace that idea, it will be in a more complex form.

Complementary to this shift in emphasis has been a growing sense that Christian developments in the second century should not be seen primarily in isolation from the wider cultural and religious world out of which they emerged. Rather, reflecting a trend in the study of late antique Christianity pioneered by Peter Brown, such developments should be viewed within the framework of wider changes in the ancient world. Such a shift is precisely that — Christianity has always been viewed by those who have specialized in its study as a movement emerging from a particular context and explicable in relation to that context. However, whereas the tendency has been to describe it as primarily new and marked by its 'difference' within the ancient world, the shift towards a more embedded representation allows Christianity to be treated as one among a number of Mediterranean religions.

The current volume seeks to reflect this changed environment through the discussion of a number of issues and themes which are central to it. While the broad subject of the individual chapters was chosen by the convenors of the conference, there was no attempt to impose a particular format upon them or a unifying ideological position. In fact, as will become clear, while all the chapters reflect the shifting landscape of second-century Christian studies, they do so in very different ways, sometimes agreeing, sometimes disagreeing, with the broad trends that are outlined earlier and will be discussed in greater detail later, but always feeling the need to engage with them.

It is not the purpose of the chapters to provide either an introduction to the complexities of the new landscape outlined earlier or a comprehensive analysis of them.¹⁰ The subjects treated do, in different ways, reflect key aspects of the changing world of second-century studies, although inevitably they could be extended in many directions; moreover, the adoption of different levels of approach, some more abstract, others more

detailed and specific, offers a combination of broader theory and assessment with text-based analysis.

The volume also reflects the shifting environment to which the previous paragraphs have referred through the identity of its contributors. While some of these hail from departments of theology and/or religious studies, others are classicists or scholars of ancient Judaism. While it would be wrong to imply that people from the latter two disciplines have not been participants already for some time in the discussion of the Christian second century, they are more so now than was once the case, a fact which reflects, in part at least, a growing sense that ancient Christianity can illuminate the development of ancient Judaism and of the pagan world out of which it emerged as well as the study of those subjects illuminating it. It is hoped that, together, the variety of subject and of approach, inevitably selective, will provoke further conversations between participants from different backgrounds and contribute towards re-envisioning this period.

In what follows we attempt to locate the chapters within the framework of some of the formative debates, both of subject and method, within the study of second-century Christianity, and invite readers to join in the conversation that ensues.

Methods of Study

It cannot yet be said that the second century has become the conscious focus of methodological experimentation to the extent that has been the case with the New (and Old) Testament. In the latter, the primacy of the so-called historical-critical method, with its attention fixed on questions of sources, dating, authorial intention and readerly context, has been effectively challenged, particularly by approaches which either prioritize the ideological agenda introduced by the investigator, or immerse themselves in the literary strategies of the narrative, and in the play between the reader and a text, which is the sole reliable producer of its 'world'. Many students of the second century are still more concerned in general to uncover 'what happened', and are largely confident of being able to do so, even while acknowledging, at least in the case of both the Jews and the Christians of the Graeco-Roman world, that the exercise is constrained, if not distorted, by the fact that the surviving evidence represents a small fraction of what was produced

at the time. Yet even in this endeavour the focus of attention has perhaps shifted. As in other history-writing, it is no longer assumed that the story is to be told through the 'great, the good and their dastardly opponents', that is through the church men [sic], their hierarchies and institutions, and their triumphant battles over the forces of opposition, whether external 'paganism' or internal 'heresy'. There may be only limited interest in describing the 'everyday life of the early Christians', which was probably not so different from the everyday life of their neighbours, but that latter fact itself becomes a point of interest rather than of disdain. Moreover, the varying perceptions and practices of those who did not leave literary texts are no longer treated as of secondary interest or status; hence, as shall be seen, 'archaeology' and the study of material culture are now recognized as offering an alternative window into the past, capturing such experiences, in contrast to the older picture of 'biblical archaeology' as being in the service of demonstrating the truth and antiquity of the texts." This is taken up by Laura Nasrallah's chapter, which enables a dialogue between the material evidence for dice oracles and literary texts in order to offer a new perspective on Christian participation in fundamental human experiences and the philosophical questions they provoked.

This example reflects the broader concern to hear alternative voices to those that speak through the texts which previous accounts have traditionally treated as the authoritative record of the past. That concern coincides with other related ones, and with similar ones elsewhere in the humanities. The pervasive current emphasis on the diversity of emergent Christianity, as also of the Judaism of the period, reflects this widespread rejection of allegiance to the controlling narrative of the supposed victors. That this is but a subset of the rejection of a single master-narrative, which is characteristic of post-modernity, need only alert us to the fact that previous accounts of the period were no less contextually framed. So, too, the contemporary rejection of established authorities is played out here in the fascination with non-canonical texts of the period, whether long-known or newly discovered, and with the theories of past political manoeuvring that ensured their suppression, both as popularized (The Da Vinci Code) and in more scholarly circles (the claims for the priority of Marcion's Gospel).

Perhaps most illustrative of the method would be the now familiar example of listening to the alternative voices of women, a subject not treated in this volume. Here, the study of early Christianity has followed in the wake of that of the New Testament, while also being enriched by what has been happening in scholarship on Late Antiquity. Initial strategies merely named the women, either whose presence in the texts had long been ignored (e.g. Junia in Romans 16.7) or who were to be found in writings that had been marginalized in the political processes of the following centuries, and gave them their place in the history, often in conscious challenge to subsequent histories and vested interests that denied them a continuing role. Subsequently, greater awareness of the text itself, and of the rhetorical strategies embedded in all writing and even the apparently 'purely informational' or 'documentary', has challenged an optimistic historicism. More recently, attention has turned from 'women' to 'gender', a category from which none can escape, but which nonetheless is recognized as a cultural construct; hence the interest has been on how the constructions of gender characteristic of the Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds can be seen to play out within Christian texts, and how, if at all, the latter subvert these. The intersection between cultural studies and the study of Late Antiquity, particularly in North America, has been especially creative, with reference mostly to the fourth century although with an impact also on the second." Yet an emphasis on 'construction', the so-called literary turn, may successfully undermine any attempt to parrot the received master-narrative, but may also exclude the retrieval of any alternative narrative after all available.

The same dilemmas of 'construction' also plague the recent interest in identity and its formation. Past confident histories of Christianity and its neighbours in the second century inevitably assumed a stability and unanimity regarding the subject of the story. Contemporary critiques of the essentialism that has accompanied modern discourses of race, ethnicity or nationhood have joined forces with sensitivity to the rhetoric of the literary texts (as also of material culture) as being no less engaged in the persuasive construction of a reality. The reverse side of the coin of the recognition of the diversity of early Christianity(ies) has been the recognition also of the strategies by which the literary texts project an

uncontroverted account of what it is to be 'a Christian', even if that is not a term all prioritize. Students of the classical world have examined how, out of a disparate set of peoples, histories and experiences, a sense of 'being Greek' was shaped, regardless of whether all signed up to it; the same was true of 'Roman-ness'. How far did the construction of a 'Christian' identity follow the same lines? Some, echoing their early forbears, would emphasize that Christian texts pay little attention to such defining 'ethnic' characteristics as language, territory or descent. Erich Gruen and Oskar Skarsaune are largely agreed in what follows that the formula 'a third race [genas]', found in a few early texts, does not point to any 'ethnic' characterization of the early Christians within the second century, either by outsiders or by themselves. Both highlight the primary concern of the texts cited as one of negotiating the relationship between the new movement and the Jewish matrix and heritage of its birth. More implicitly, both are engaged in a refutation of those interpreters who, with more emphasis on the constructed character of all such attempts at self-definition, whether or not dubbed 'ethnic' or 'racial', would contend that the strategies deployed by early Christian writers are in practice of a very similar order to those of their 'Greek' or 'Roman' peers, as also to those of the theoretical modelling of identities. However, such methodological concentration on the nature of literary rhetorical strategies and on the instability of construction may lead some to question whether any study of 'early Christianity', and so of its fellow journeyers, is able to identify the object of its endeavours.

Narrative or No Narrative

Can a story of second-century Christianity be told? Is such an undertaking desirable? These questions can be raised on a number of accounts. First, the issue of Christian diversity, however understood, problematizes privileging particular versions of Christian truth over others, and so telling a particular story, which necessarily excludes and so, by extension, misrepresents. Related to this is the issue of teleologies — that is, the difficulty of telling a story without assuming a particular result, or put another way, the linear character of stories always assumes an endpoint, which, again in an exclusionary way, dictates the way the story is told. Third, does the rise of theoretical considerations,

discussed before, make the telling of a story seem passé, perhaps impossible, even if in the end it may be difficult to avoid?

Those who have been strong advocates of diversity have not always abandoned narrative. Bauer had a story to tell, which assumed the temporal precedence in many parts of the empire of what came to be called:

Anti-Exceptionalism

While it is true that Christianity has always been studied with reference to its contemporary wider pagan and Jewish world, and that a sound knowledge of the context in which Christian beliefs and ideas were forged was essential to scholarly pursuit of the subject, there is now more awareness of, and interest in, the extent to which Christianity was an expression of wider movements in the ancient world. In earlier scholarship there was a tendency to interpret Christianity through its difference from contemporary culture, or for its adoption of aspects of that culture, in particular were defined as 'philosophical' or 'Hellenistic', which might be viewed as distorting the essential structure of Christianity.³ While such concerns may not have disappeared, early Christianity has come to be seen as a part of what is often dubbed 'late antiquity' and as expressive of, and contributing to, its 'making'. Elements of this tendency can already be seen in the volume edited by Lieu, North and Rajak over two decades ago, all contributors to the present volume. North, for instance, argued against the view that Christianity was in some senses a new manifestation in the ancient world, to be hived off and separated from other ancient 'religions'. Instead, it was a reflection of a development in the ancient world 'from religion as embedded in the city state to religion as choice of differentiated groups offering different qualities of religious doctrine, different experiences, insights, or just different myths and stories to make sense of the absurdity of human experience'. In an influential but contested metaphor, Christianity emerges in an ancient world where religion is no longer seen in terms of a monopoly but of a marketplace, where choices are possible and competition and conflict inevitable. North was not arguing for the view that Christianity was no more than the expression of a tendency — he makes much, for instance, of its missionizing character, something which he sees as unique to it — but the argument of his chapter is

broadly what one might term an anti-exceptionalist one.

The mild anti-exceptionalism of North's chapter has been echoed in more detailed and specific studies. Illustrative of this has been recent study of Christian heresiology: where previously even those who were keen to emphasize its constructed character saw it as strongly Christian in expression, a younger generation of scholars have located it within developments witnessed in Platonism, among sophists and other philosophical movements. For instance, Kendra Eshelman has argued, *inter alia*, that the formation of orthodoxy is something of a shared project of the second century, and that sophists and philosophers not only provide some of the same resources and techniques, which will enable Christians to create an idea of orthodoxy, but that there is a general drift in this sort of direction in the ancient world. In an exploration of developing Christian discourse, Laura Nasrallah has sought to show how Christian literature of the second century takes up themes relating to justice, piety and related religious matters, which found expression in the material culture of the period. Complementary to some of this discussion has been Rebecca Lyman's thesis that Christian ideas of heresy simply represent a range of attempts by Hellenistic thinkers to bring together ideas of universal truth and local beliefs, thereby in some ways detoxifying Christianity's apparent intolerance. Other expressions of this tendency to seek to understand Christianity as, amongst other things, a reflection of the concerns of the Second Sophistic could be multiplied. None would argue a case for Christianity being precisely like something else but the emphasis in the discussion has undoubtedly changed.

The chapters in this volume reflect elements of this debate. Greg Woolf presents an intentionally anti-exceptionalist case for Christianity: taking forward the arguments of North, and the thoughts of J. Z. Smith, Woolf argues that Christianity emerged in a world, which, influenced by the rise of empires which promoted immigration and mobility, had spawned diasporic communities and undermined conventional distinctions between local and translocal cults. The new religious movements which emerged in such a context, the beginnings of which can be seen in the second century, shared family resemblances, accounted for by the shared context

in which they arose. It is in such a context that competition between religions arose and with it, persecution. At a more fine-grained and specific level, and from different perspectives, Morgan and Nasrallah seek to undermine conventional distinctions between Christianity as, on the one hand, a religion of doctrine, and pagan and indeed Jewish religion as, on the other, ones marked by praxis. So Morgan shows, by an examination of Plutarch and others, that belief about the gods was in fact important, while Nasrallah, through looking at a dice oracle at Corinth, discusses the complex relationship between practices represented by such objects and the beliefs they imply, beliefs, which in complex ways could be seen to be reflected in Christian texts. Other chapters, which are not consciously engagements with this question, adopt more ambivalent positions on it. So John North, while clear that Lucian's presentation of Christianity is not one marked by a sense of repulsion at the phenomenon, that is, an ingrained sense of its alien character, shows how Lucian can be seen to align it with Cynicism, but still suggests that Lucian is struggling to place it on his religio-cultural map, a struggle reflected in other writers, even Christian ones like Diognetus. Tim Whitmarsh, in his contribution on Christians as atheists, sees the former as both using contemporary understandings of atheism in a variety of rhetorically charged ways, but also as contributing to a development of the term. Rebecca Flemming, on the other hand, in a discussion of textual authority amongst various medical writers in the period, especially Galen, highlights the broadly eclectic approach to this matter. True, Galen can speak of a kind of 'sect-mania' when it comes to some medical writers, but this is misleading when the sources are analysed closely. Christians are difficult to situate on this map but their unified approach to knowledge does not, as Eshelman argues, reflect a well-established characteristic of the age. For Verheyden canonization or the movements towards it, which seem to mark out second-century Christianity, could be taken to reflect tendencies in that direction in the Second Sophistic, partly because Christians have left no record of their reasons for proceeding in such a way.

The Parting of the Ways

Of the various themes addressed in this volume, the remodelling of the relationship between 'Judaism'

and 'Christianity' has been perhaps the most securely established in scholarly discussion. The older model, according to which 'Christianity', conceived, if not already brought to birth, in the person of Jesus or of Paul, had broken away from 'Judaism' by the end of the first century, taking with it the Scriptures ('Old Testament') in their Greek translation, and effectively leaving its erstwhile parent to ossify in legalism, has now largely been confined to the annals of the history of scholarship. This triumphalist model was replaced by one which gave greater recognition to the ongoing but separate history of Jewish communities, which for a time continued to present a seductive threat to early Christian groups. Dubbed as 'the Parting of the Ways' at a time when it was already breaking down, that model had assumed that it was reasonable to speak of 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' as discrete entities, confused only by 'Jewish Christians' who defied the inevitable and so were viewed as 'heretics' by both. As has been seen, even before the relationship between the two came under scrutiny, the unitary character of each was being dissolved; at the same time the Dead Sea Scrolls and a re-evaluation of Hellenistic Jewish texts meant that a more variegated 'Judaism' seemingly provided a less hostile environment within which Jesus, 'the early Jesus movement' and, indeed, its successors into the second century could be located. The 'alternative voices' evidenced by the patterns of archaeological remains often resisted unequivocal definition as either Christian or Jewish (or, indeed, pagan); these, together with the shadowy figures presupposed by the polemic of texts whose legitimate authority was no longer given historical priority, pointed to more complex patterns of coexistence and of porous boundaries as well as of elasticity of doctrinal definition. Dissatisfaction with a single grand narrative directed attention to the different stories of particular localities or texts. The result was the continually unstable and proliferating 'Partings (and perhaps Re-joinings) of Ways', the time frame for which could be extended into the fourth century and even beyond. It has to be admitted that this is not the picture that the texts project, as the chapters by Gruen and Skarsaune both demonstrate; equally it is not the picture that seems to be presupposed by the accounts of persecution 'as a Christian', even by those suggested by the Roman authors such as Tacitus,

and, unsurprisingly, not by the majority of 'Martyr Acts', which are penned by 'Christians'. These latter, in the second century most notably the Martyrdom of Polycarp and that told in the Letter of the Churches at Lyons and Vienne, are constructed around the self-defining statement 'I am a Christian', giving little role, or only a highly ambiguous one, to the Jews. This last position, of the 'difference' established by persecution, is to a considerable extent defended by Horbury in this volume, although he too acknowledges to a greater degree than have some scholars the extent to which Jewish communities also faced the political authorities with Septuagint and other Hellenistic Jewish texts. The irony of this approach, which seeks to restore to those Diaspora communities their own distinctive and self-chosen identity, is that these Hellenistic texts, of which there are very few that survive, were for the most part transmitted and preserved through Christian channels, and the literary and conceptual frameworks within which they can be read are those provided by surviving Christian literature. Hence, even a narrative that seeks to be told in its own voice is hard put to escape the shadow of 'the Parting'.

The Shifting Challenges of Studying Texts
Despite the important corrective of the voices from material culture already noted, the recovery of the second century is necessarily dominated by texts and the reading of texts. This is not simply a matter of the nature of the evidence that survives, or of the inclinations and opportunities of those who study it: there are indeed few material remains that can be unequivocally assigned to a Christian provenance from the second century, but literary works, even if but the tip of the iceberg, have been transmitted, while others, once lost or suppressed, have been recovered — such as the Nag Hammadi texts which have revolutionized the study of 'Gnosticism' (as reflected in the chapters by King and Edwards). It is also the case that, even among Christians, the production of texts and the debates over the authority ascribed to texts were a primary mechanism for developing self-understanding, or for the construction of an identity (so Verheyden). Thus both Gruen and Skarsaune, in asking how far Christians understood themselves as 'a new (or third) race', are driven to the close reading of texts as well as to seeing how these texts in turn are engaged in the reinterpretation of earlier texts, the 'Jewish' scriptures. Despite debates over the limited

extent of literacy, however defined, in the Empire, and the expectation that Christians (and perhaps Jews) would have been positioned at the lower levels of the social range, texts dominate contemporary understandings of the distinctive character of the period. In an age where, it has been argued, the popularization of philosophy extended deeply across society, the proper interpretation of troubling insecurity. In so doing he examines a larger range of sources than is commonly considered in the debate to allow some similarity between the Jewish and Christian experience, although at the end it is difference in status that is most marked; this, then, implies that the difference between Jews and Christians was recognized by outsiders, and that they could be distinguished in times of persecution.

However, the new model has been to underplay 'difference', and to stress shared experiences, allegiance and perhaps communal practices. Yet, to the extent that it can still generate a broad narrative, this has often remained a 'Christian' one. As was also the case in the period under review and in its sources (as is well illustrated by Skarsaune's chapter), the 'problem' has been largely one of and for Christian history and theology — although this is not to deny the important contributions made by Jewish scholars, especially more recently. Both Alexander and Rajak show, however, how it can also be treated as a Jewish narrative. Alexander's chapter intersects with the vigorous debates within scholarship on early Judaism as to whether the rabbinic texts reflect directly the dominance of the rabbis in Palestinian Judaism from the second century, or whether they are the product of the constructed or imagined world of a self-defining caucus, and/or whether they are essentially irrelevant even for the history of Syria-Palestine under the Roman Empire. Alexander seeks a mediating path, admitting the minority status of the Rabbis but offering a model for their developing influence without ignoring the other groups whom the rabbinic perspective seeks to marginalize, including the Christians.

It has been the weight of literary sources that has inevitably led the rabbinic perceptions to dominate both the old and the new narratives. More recently, careful attention to the archaeological remains, monumental and inscriptional, alongside Jewish texts written or preserved in Greek, has redressed

the balance and allowed the Jews of the Diaspora a voice of equal authority to that of the land and city they recognized as a motherland. Tessa Rajak addresses the much-debated question of the nature of the interaction between Jewish communities and their Graeco-Roman context, avoiding simplistic antitheses of (syncretic) assimilation versus stubborn isolationism. In so doing she draws on the model of being a 'translation culture', particularly in the light of the function of the inherited writings of the past, whether of Homer or of Plato, was a major preoccupation. As noted by Löhr, this was a period in which the commentary, the lexicon and the handbook of excerpts flourished, as too did the hermeneutical challenge of allowing the 'myths' of old to address the sensibilities of the present. In exploring the nature of 'Gnostic myth', Edwards presents a contextually rooted hermeneutical lens that provides an alternative to the extreme fantasizing encouraged by the more literal accounts of so-called 'Gnostic' writings given by the heresiologists such as Irenaeus or Epiphanius. Some have argued that it was at this textually and hermeutically focused point that the early Christians, and perhaps their more elusive Jewish neighbours, might look most like the other textual enthusiasts of their day; indeed Christian 'intellectuals' may have had more in common with their intellectual peers of whatever persuasion than with some who 'only' shared their faith in Jesus. Such approaches make possible an account that sidesteps the value-laden categories of canon or of inspiration, as Verheyden's analysis of the functions of the ascription of authority indicates. Yet it is striking that he and Flemming take different positions as they try to locate the practices of ascribing authority to texts among the early Christians and their philosophical neighbours. From another perspective and challenging representations of the Christian institutional form, 'the church', as a new phenomenon, owing something to the Jewish diaspora synagogue but developing under its own momentum, Löhr, as already noted, argues that the model of 'philosophical school', where such textual debates were carried out, best fits the framework in which many of the more creative Christian thinkers worked. With its porous boundaries and opportunities for debate and experimentation, Löhr finds here too the framework within which the diversity of Christian thought and practice in the

second century can be understood without the prejudicial use of terms such as 'orthodoxy', 'heresy' or even 'heterodoxy'. Such models would emerge only beyond our period with the development of new institutional structures. All this can seem a long way from the older approaches that treated the texts as documentary evidence to be excavated to uncover the 'real world behind them'. Yet such approaches are not excluded; North begins by setting out how the complex literary strategies of a Lucian need careful negotiation in order to get beyond the playfulness of the text, and yet he still argues that such negotiation is possible and that it can yield valuable results in suggesting how Christian communities may have appeared, or at least how they can have been credibly represented, to a curious readership.

Religion or Appropriate Categories for Christianity

As questions of identity formation have come to play an ever greater role in the study of early Christianity, the problem as to how best to characterize the movement has loomed large. In one sense the answer to this question has appeared simple — Christianity is a religion; indeed, more often than not the movement is discussed in that context, that is, as a part of the religious history of the ancient world. In this context the second century is sometimes held to be the period in which that identity came to be more precisely defined. Yet it is at this point that one of the most hotly contested definitional questions emerges: namely, is it possible to talk about religion in the ancient world? Is it a category that the ancients would have understood or that makes sense of the experiences and phenomena to be described? There is broad agreement that what the Romans described as *religio* and the Greeks as *theskeia* are not the same as what is understood by 'religion' in a contemporary context, if that is taken to refer to private or personal spiritual activities and experiences separate from those activities conventionally designated as secular, such as those associated with politics, economics or family life. It is a truism that in the ancient world so-called religious activities permeated all areas of life,⁴⁹ whereas the 'religious' versus 'secular' dichotomy can be held to be a product of the early modern age when, for a number of complex reasons, a concept of secularity came to be developed. This is

not to deny that certain acts were performed in the ancient world that might most naturally be dubbed 'religious', nor that, for some at least, there was something like a kind of embedded religion;⁵ nor even that there are signs at points prior to the early modern age for the idea of religion as a separate category. Perhaps inevitably, many discussions of the topic and of the period, even while expressing considerable caution about the term 'religion', nevertheless feel that it can be used, albeit with a considerable health warning, and even that it has to be used."

Within this context how should Christianity in the second century be categorized and where should it be positioned in the broader cultural background of which it was a part? To what extent, indeed, did Christianity mark a significant point in the creation of something called religion, or perhaps reflect a wider changing religious landscape?

A number of the chapters here touch on aspects of this dilemma, examining both the issue of Christianity's place within a wider religious environment and aspects of its own self-designation. As has been seen, Greg Woolf, building upon the work of Jonathan Z. Smith and John North, sees the second century as a transition period between a world in which there was no distinction between religious identity and ethnic or familial identity to a time when the world was beginning to be organized by religions, or, as he prefers to call them, emergent religions, products in some sense of 'convergent evolution', and in that sense only gradually evolving entities. The term 'emergent' does not only express this overall gradualism, but also refers to those characteristics he wishes to associate with religions (a distinctive world view; an exclusive membership; unique rituals, symbols and perhaps texts of special significance for co-religionists; institutionalized authority). The tone here is tentative but Woolf is clear that a text like Apuleius' *Metamorphosis*, with its exploration of different religious ideas and modes of thought, and Lucian's *Alexander*, where Epicureans and Christians are presented as competing to have their truth claims accepted, could not have been written in earlier centuries. Here, then, there is an acceptance of a transition in the history of religion as an idea, but one in which Christians are participants but not the only participants.

John North explicitly raises the question about the appropriateness of the term 'religion' in this period. He accepts that the term can only be used advisedly but at the same time highlights the way in which writers like Lucian struggled to find an appropriate term with which to describe the Christian movement, noting in passing how the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* can describe the movement as a *theosebeia*, a *genos* and a *epitedeuma* (*Diog. l.l*), in the space of a few lines, indicating the lack of an appropriate category with which to describe the latter. Löhr adds a further designation, *philosophic*, and demonstrates that objections to its use on the grounds of the apparently 'religious'/revelatory attitude to knowledge amongst Christian philosophers fail to take sufficient account of the religious content of pagan philosophy. William Horbury notes the shared nomenclature between Jews and Christians, not least in their usage of biblically charged words like 'assembly' (*ekklesia*), or a 'gathering' (*sunagoge*) or a 'people' (*laos*) to describe themselves. While he does not discuss the religious dimension of such terms, he does hint at their political import. Erich Gruen and Oskar Skarsaune comment further on the idea of Christians as a race or a people, particularly on the epithet 'third race'; despite their scepticism about its 'racial' associations and their attempt to highlight what they take to be its religious characteristics when used by Christians, it can hardly be denied that this, and the other terms discussed, used both by others and themselves in this period, further complicates the debate about Christianity's identity as a religion.

As will have become obvious, it has not been the task either of this Introduction or of the volume as a whole to provide a new and settled account of the second Christian century. Participants in the conference which initiated the book were agreed that it had stimulated many conversations which had a long way to run, with yet other questions waiting to be asked. The chapters that follow are intended both to introduce those unfamiliar with the period or with recent debate to both, and to invite both them and the more seasoned students to engage in further exploration and mapping.

[A Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'](#)
edited by Petri Luomanen and Antti Marjanen
[Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, Brill Academic

Publishing, 9789004144644] It also includes a [paperback edition](#).

This landmark about volume Christian heresies and heretics is biographical and covers both primitive and early church, ca. 30-600, each essay the includes bibliographical references and index.

The book illuminates "the other side" of early Christianity by examining thinkers and movements that were embraced by many second-century religious seekers as legitimate forms of Christianity, but which are now largely forgotten, or are known only from the characteristics attributed to them in the writings of their main adversaries.

The collection deals with the following teachers and movements: Basilides, Sethianism, Valentinus' school, Marcion, Tatian, Bardaisan, Montanists, Cerinthus, Ebionites, Nazarenes, Jewish-Christianity of the Pseudo-Clementines, and Elchasites.

Where appropriate, the authors have included an overview of the life and significant publications of the "heretics," along with a description of their theologies and movements. Therefore, this volume can serve as a handbook of the second-century "heretics" and their "heresies." Since all the chapters have been written by specialists who wrestle daily with their research themes, the contributions also offer new perspectives and insights stimulating further discussion on this fascinating—but often neglected—side of early Christianity.

"The "Companion "is a landmark. A handbook of the so-called heresies or heterodox Christianities of the first and second centuries, it performs two functions at once, both equally important. It provides us with the most authoritative and lucid presentations of the consensus of scholarship on the given documents or tendencies or groups as well as giving us the considered, cutting-edge thinking of just the right scholar for each one." Daniel Boyarin (University of California, Berkeley).

"So-called "heretics" in the early church have become an important focus of interest for many in recent years. New texts and new insights have increased our knowledge of some of these individuals and groups which the "orthodox" rejected. These essays will provide a valuable resource for those wanting to find out more about these figures in the light of the most recent

scholarship. All the essays are thoroughly researched, clearly written and well documented. This volume will be essential reading, and an important reference work, for all those studying the variegated history of Christianity in the second century. It is certainly an excellent and timely production and will be very much appreciated as a resource by readers." Christopher Tuckett (Pembroke College).

"This lively collection of essays, authored by an impressive cast of international scholars, portrays some of the most creative and provocative Christian thinkers of the second century - Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, Tatian, Montanus, and others - all of whom were destined to be called "heretics" and were to be silenced by their opponents. This fascinating book gives voice to these teachers once again, and it allows their alternative interpretations of Christianity to be heard with clarity". Marvin Meyer (Chapman University).

"This volume offers the most up-to-date and sophisticated introduction available to diverse types of second century Christianity that were criticized by the patristic opponents of heresy. In a series of brilliant and nuanced articles, scholarly specialists assess recently discovered evidence alongside the better known heresiological testimony. The result is a sound and insightful portrait of the social dynamics and astonishing inventiveness of these alternative Christianities." Karen L. King (Harvard University, The Divinity School).

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Luttikhuisen

Excerpt: The idea for this publication sprang from an afternoon coffee break in the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Helsinki. At the table were members of two research groups of the Department: Early Jewish Christianity and Myth and Social Reality in Gnostic and Related Documents. Both groups work with texts traditionally considered more-or-less heretical. As we chatted together, somehow, rather spontaneously, the idea of a volume focusing on the "other side" of second-century Christianity materialized. It would examine the documents and groups and persons that had been marginalized and denounced as heretical by the emerging "Great Church." After twenty minutes of discussion (and several cups of coffee) a plan was developed to fill an obvious lacuna in current research on the development of early Christianity. A volume was envisioned that would provide an up-to-date description of the most important second-century "heresies" and these movements' leading figures. Although it took several years to convert these plans into reality, the volume in hand suggests that coffee breaks can serve several useful purposes simultaneously.

This collection of essays deals with persons and movements traditionally characterized as heretical. However, as the quotation marks in the title of this volume suggest, the intention is not to map the second-century religious terrain from the viewpoint of the form of Christianity that became dominant and developed into the early Catholic Church. Instead, the idea is to investigate "the other side," by examining the thinkers and movements that were, at the time, embraced by many second-century religious seekers as legitimate forms of Christianity, but which are now largely forgotten, or are known only from the characteristics attributed to them in the writings of their main adversaries.

The task is not easy since much of the crucial firsthand evidence is lost or, at best, waits to be found somewhere in secluded caves, ancient dumping grounds, or in unlisted holdings of papyri. This means that the researcher must try to glean reliable information from the church fathers' polemical writings, their biased descriptions of their

adversaries' teaching, and assess it in light of what can be known of these persons' own productions. The problem is that the material for comparison is often extremely scanty.

As a matter of fact, Tatian is the only figure in this volume from whom a complete work exists. Even in his case, the work that has survived is not the one that he is most famous for, the *Diatessaron*, but *Oratio ad graecos*, an apologetic treatise that later served the interest of the Church in Rome very well. Bardaisan's thoughts have to be gleaned from the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* which was composed by one of his students, Philippus. Some fragments of Basilides', Marcion's, Valentinus', and the Montanists' own works have survived in the writings of their adversaries, but no overall picture of their views can be painted on the basis of these fragments alone. Cerinthus' ideas can also be reconstructed only from the polemical, inconsistent, and contradictory writings of the church fathers. If he ever wrote any treatises, no references to his writings have been preserved, apart from rumors which attribute the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation to him. Although a scholar who aims at a historical-critical reconstruction of the original ideas and teachings of "heretics" like these faces difficulties, the task is by no means impossible. The chapters in this book show that after a careful assessment of the source materials, some distinctive ideas of these alternative second-century Christian movements can be delineated.

The articles in the present collection have been arranged in three partially overlapping thematic clusters: (1) Gnostics, (2) Teachers in the West and in the East, and (3) Jewish Christians. We have also chosen to present teachers and movements that can more squarely be fixed in history before those whose historical character is debated. The thematic arrangement means, however, that there are exceptions to this rule.

The two earliest teachers discussed are Cerinthus and Basilides, who were already active in the late first and early second century. Although Cerinthus may have been active even before Basilides, the collection is opened with the article on "Basilides the Gnostic," followed by two thematically related contributions on Sethianism and Valentinus' school. After Valentinus follow Marcion and Tatian, two teachers who were also active in Rome.

Tatian returned to the East, where his fame was comparable to that of Bardaisan, the great man of Edessa, the center of Eastern Syrian Christianity. The Phrygian prophesy, Montanism, although it also gained influence in Rome and elsewhere in the West, originated in Asia Minor, where it found its greatest support. The same was true with Cerinthus. Since chiliasm has been discussed in connection with both the Montanists and Cerinthus, these two are treated after Bardaisan.

Although Cerinthus was a historical figure, scholars have not been able to agree whether he was a Gnostic or a Jewish-Christian teacher. The chapter in the present collection argues that he was mainly drawing on Jewish ideas. For this reason, and because the heresiologists usually described him as a predecessor of the Jewish-Christian Ebionites, the chapter on him opens the Jewish-Christian section of this volume.

While the information about the history and ideas of Cerinthus, Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, Tatian, Bardaisan, and the Montanist prophets is meager, there is no doubt about the historicity of these teachers, and a relatively reliable picture of their main ideas can be inferred from the sources available. The situation is different in the case of persons and movements more or less closely tied to Jewish Christianity. Therefore, we have placed the "Gnostics" and the "Western and Eastern teachers" before the "Jewish Christians" hoping that those who read the articles in that order would be able to form an overall view of the historical circumstances and of current topics in philosophical and theological debates before moving on to the articles—from Cerinthus onwards—that have less first hand evidence available.

The present collection is a selection of "heresies" among which the formative Catholic Christianity found its main adversaries in the second century; but it is clear that it is not a complete collection of the second-century alternative teachers and movements. In addition to the "heresies" listed by the church fathers but not treated in this volume, there were also other movements and teachers who never made their way to the heresiological treatises. Only one such branch of Christianity is discussed in this book: the Jewish Christianity of the Pseudo-Clementines. To be sure, Epiphanius obviously had some Pseudo-Clementine writings in his use when he composed his Panarion but he

attributed them to the Ebionites mixing the data he picked from these texts with all the tales his predecessors had provided about the Ebionites. When studied in its own right, the Circuits of Peter, the basic writing behind the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions, reveals a type of Jewish Christianity to which Epiphanius' discussion in Panarion 30 (the chapter on the Ebionites) hardly does any justice.

The significance of the Pseudo-Clementines for the study of Jewish Christianity is comparable to the status of the Nag Hammadi texts in the study of the phenomenon traditionally called Gnosticism. Both the Pseudo-Clementines and Nag Hammadi texts provide an important devotees' point of view to religiosity criticized by the church fathers indicating that early Christianity was even more colorful than one would imagine on the basis of the heresiological treatises.

The writers of the articles on Basilides, Sethians and Valentinus' school have made extensive use of the Nag Hammadi texts. Nevertheless, the Gospel of Thomas is not discussed in this volume although there is no doubt about its significance in second-century Christianity in general. One reason for this is that the volume focuses on the movements and persons that have been traditionally included among "heresies," and the church fathers did not speak about Thomasine Christians, although they made some reference to the Gospel of Thomas in their lists of canonical and non-canonical writings (for instance, Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 3.25). Another reason for the omission is that an abundance of literature on Thomas and its community is already available.

The fact that Thomasine Christians are not refuted in the heresiologies illustrates very well one of the features that stand out in the present collection as a whole: Teachers and movements were denounced as heretical especially because they were in conflict with the type of Christianity that was gaining the upper hand in Rome in the second half of the second century. Had there appeared a teacher in Rome who based his teaching exclusively on the Gospel of Thomas the same way Alcibiades was drawing on the Book of Elchasai—later heresiologists might very well have tried to refute the "Thomasaites," too. The dominance of the Roman viewpoint in heresiological discourse is also exemplified by the fact that Tatian's heretical

reputation as one of the chief proponents of Encratism was entertained only in the western heresiologies. Tatian was condemned in the West as a leading proponent of Encratism and expelled from the Roman church. But in the East, Syrian Christianity—which was characterized from the outset by much stronger ascetic tendencies than was Western Christianity—unreservedly accepted him and his harmony of the Gospels, the Diatessaron, apparently unaware of (or choosing to ignore) his reputation as a "heretic".

Another characteristic prominent in the following chapters is the proximity of many of the "heretical" ideas discussed in this volume with ideas in the New Testament. Although the teachers who were condemned as "heretics" imported ideas from the outside of the New Testament as well—often from popular philosophy (in which mainstream Christian writers were equally interested)—many of their positions were squarely grounded in the issues with which New Testament authors were also wrestling. For example, Marcion's radical denial of the validity of the Old Testament scriptures can be seen as a logical consequence of Paul's denunciation of the law. On the other hand, it is clear that the views of the conservative Jewish Christians were equally representative of ideas documented in the New Testament. "Possession" Christology, which is linked with Cerinthus and the Ebionites, may very well be one of the oldest Christological models in the New Testament. The central role of prophecy in Montanism has its roots in the proclamation of the Paraclete whom the Johannine Christ promised to send to his followers to teach them the truths his own disciples could not receive in their lifetime. The millenarian kingdom which is part of the teachings of Cerinthus and the Montanists stems from the concluding chapters of the Book of Revelation. Furthermore, asceticism is not an unknown phenomenon in the New Testament. All in all, from the viewpoint of reception history it is often impossible to make any difference between "orthodox" and "heretic" teachers as regards the way they reinterpreted New Testament materials.

The authors have sometimes included an overview of the life and significant publications of the "heretics," along with a description of their theologies and movements. Therefore, this volume can serve as a handbook of the second-century "heretics" and their "heresies." At the same time,

however, many of the chapters, written by specialists who wrestle daily with these subjects, offer new perspectives and insights into these issues. In our view, this gives the volume a unique and independent profile and will hopefully also stimulate further research on this fascinating—but often neglected—side of early Christianity. <>

[The Origin of Divine Christology](#) by Andrew Ter Ern Loke [Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, Cambridge University Press, 9781107199262]

In recent years, there has been considerable debate concerning the origin of divine Christology. Nevertheless, the proposed theories are beset with problems, such as failing to address the evidence of widespread agreement among the earliest Christians concerning divine Christology, and the issues related to whether Jesus' intention was falsified. This book offers a new contribution by addressing these issues using transdisciplinary tools. It proposes that the earliest Christians regarded Jesus as divine because a sizeable group of them perceived that Jesus claimed and showed himself to be divine, and thought that God vindicated this claim by raising Jesus from the dead. It also provides a comprehensive critique of alternative proposals, and synthesizes their strengths. It defends the appropriateness and merits of utilizing philosophical distinctions (e.g. between ontology and function) and Trinitarian concepts for explaining early Christology, and incorporates comparative religion by examining cases of deification in other contexts.

'This fresh attempt to grapple with the problem of the origins of Christology both offers what is in some ways an elegantly simple solution, and is argued with a philosophical sophistication uncommon in New Testament scholarship. Loke's argument deserves close attention from all those interested in the earliest Christian beliefs about Jesus.' Simon Gathercole, University of Cambridge

'The debate over Jesus and the origin of views about his divinity in Christology is a maze for most, woven over a few centuries of careful discussion. Loke's *The Origin of Divine Christology* surveys and assesses that debate with skill, bringing it up to date and providing guidance for thinking through the question. It provides a way through the maze

that is of rich benefit to readers.' Darrell L. Bock, Dallas Theological Seminary

'Andrew Ter Ern Loke draws on the lively debate about early Christology in recent scholarship to establish the claim that the earliest Christology was already the highest Christology. But how did this high Christology originate? Loke provides one of the most systematic examinations of this question, pressing the logic of the evidence back to Jesus' own claims about himself.' Richard Bauckham, Emeritus Professor of New Testament Studies, University of St Andrews, Scotland

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Excerpt: Some scholars have claimed that Christianity was wildly diverse at the beginning of its history and that we should speak of 'earliest Christianities' rather than 'earliest Christianity'. They have argued that 'throughout the first century, and from the earliest evidence we have in Q, Thomas, and Paul, there were many different groups that claimed Jesus as their founder'. Yet it is evident from the quotation that even these scholars would acknowledge this common element among the supposedly existent diverse groups: Despite their differences they all claim to follow Jesus (I address the arguments of these scholars in Chapter 5). By defining 'Christians' broadly as 'those who claimed to follow Jesus' rather than as 'those who followed certain doctrines about Jesus', I avoid begging the question in my historical argument by not assuming that Christians were those who regarded Jesus as truly divine and that this was the 'orthodox' view.

I shall define 'earliest Christianity' as the religion of those who claimed to follow Jesus during the period from c. AD 30 to 62; this definition leaves open the question concerning the extent of diversity within this religion. In subsequent chapters I shall show, on the basis of evidences rather than definition, that there was widespread acknowledgement in earliest Christianity that Jesus was truly divine.

I shall define 'the primitive Palestinian Christian community' as a subset of the 'earliest Christians': This community would include Christians who existed before the first Pauline epistle was written, and it would include the most influential members of the very first Christian community, such as members of 'the Twelve' who had followed Jesus closely for some time, as well as their first converts.

Excerpt:

An Overview of This Book

My argument in this book shall proceed by way of answering the following two historical questions:

- (1) Was Jesus regarded as truly divine among the earliest Christians, and
- (2) If so, what caused them to do so.

In Chapters 2 to 4, I assess the current scholarly debate concerning the first question. Chapter 2 summarizes the case that has been put forward by scholars of the New Religionsgeschichtliche Schule for thinking that highest Christology was found among the earliest Christians. In Chapters 3 and 4, I discuss the objections by critics and argue that they are inadequate.

Chapter 5 shows that there are good reasons for thinking that the Pauline letters reflect the widespread conviction within earliest Christianity that Jesus was truly divine. I point out that either the explanation for the origin of this widespread conviction involves the earliest Christians perceiving Jesus implicitly or explicitly claiming to be truly divine, or it does not involve this. I interact with several proposals for the latter possibility and illustrate the significant problems which beset this kind of proposal. In the rest of the book, I show how these and other problems can be avoided or resolved by the proposal that the earliest Christians did indeed perceive that Jesus claimed to be truly divine.

In Chapter 6, I argue that it would have been difficult and disadvantageous for the earliest Christians to originate and maintain the idea that the human Jesus whom they had lived with should be recognized as truly divine alongside God the Father. I demonstrate that, on the other hand, evidences from first-century texts indicate that the earliest Christians regarded Jesus as the primary communicator of God's demands, they were evidently concerned about accurately passing on Jesus' teachings, and that the best historical explanation for a wide variety of peculiar beliefs and practices of the earliest Christians is that they were following Jesus. I go on to explain an important corollary of the above observations: If the earliest Christians knew that Christ had himself indicated that he was not divine, or that he did not indicate that he was divine, then it is unlikely that they would have come to the widespread acknowledgement that he was truly divine. On the

other hand, the proposal that Jesus had clearly indicated that he regarded himself as truly divine would adequately explain how the highest Christology of the earliest Christians could have been held by even the more traditionalist Jewish Christians. Because they were Christians, they would all have agreed that what Christ indicated was what God demanded that they believe. I argue that this indication would have to be clear in its original setting to a significant number of disciples, for if it had not been so, we would have expected extensive discussions and debates among the earliest Christians rather than widespread agreement concerning the divinity of Jesus.

In Chapter 7, I tackle the question 'is there any evidence in the Gospels that Jesus gave a clear indication that he regarded himself as truly divine?' I defend the claim that certain 'pre-resurrection' and 'post-resurrection' passages contain this evidence.

In Chapter 8, I defend the above conclusion against a number of objections that are based on theological and philosophical assumptions. I also summarize the discussion of previous chapters under fourteen historical considerations and conclude that the alternative hypotheses do not explain these considerations as adequately as the proposal defended in this book. I end this book by testing these considerations against potential counter-examples involving the deification of human figures in various socio-religious contexts. I show that, instead of being genuine counter-examples to my proposal, these cases serve to illustrate the strength of my proposal.

The question concerning the origin of divine Christology is an important question for anyone who is interested in how Christianity began. In this book, I have argued that there are significant problems with a variety of proposals in the literature. Against the Later Unfolding Theory (Dunn) and the Later Evolutionary Theory (Casey), I have argued that the highest Christology was present among the earliest Christians. This is indicated by various evidences in the earliest Christian documents, such as 1 Cor. 8:6, Phil. 2:6-11, the indications of devotional practices (e.g. 'calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ' in 1 Cor. 1:2) and the expressions of spiritual desire for Jesus. I have shown the inadequacies of various objections, defended the appropriateness of using

philosophical distinctions (e.g. between ontology and function) and Trinitarian concepts for explaining early Christology, highlighted the importance of the Creator-creature divide in earliest Christianity and demonstrated that Jesus was regarded to be on the Creator side of this divide. I have also argued that highest Christology was widely held among the earliest Christians and replied to objections by Ehrman and others. The crucial question is how to explain this widespread conviction. I have argued that proposals which do not involve Jesus claiming to be truly divine, such as Early Evolutionary Theory (Bousset), Resurrection and Ascension Theory (Ehrman), Religious Experience Theory (Hurtado) and Theological Deduction Theory (DeConick), fail to account for this.

I conclude that the best explanation for the origin of divine Christology involves the earliest Christians perceiving that Jesus claimed and showed himself to be truly divine. This conclusion is supported by various historical considerations, such as the earliest Christians' regard for Jesus as the supreme communicator of God's will, their evident concern to pass on the traditions of Jesus' teachings, the difficulty of the idea of regarding a human Jesus as also truly divine, the issue of falsification of Jesus' intention and the fact that Christ is the best historical explanation for a diversity of other peculiar beliefs and practices of the earliest Christians. I have argued that, to explain the widespread conviction, Jesus must have given a clear indication that he regarded himself as truly divine to a significant number of disciples. The early Christians subsequently modified the language that had been used in earlier literature to describe intermediaries such as the Word, Wisdom and Spirit, and utilized the modified language to express the highest Christology that came from Jesus. By basing the earliest Christians' conviction that Jesus was truly divine on their understanding that this was God's demand as known through Christ, my proposal is appropriately Theocentric and Christocentric. Finally, I have argued that traces of my proposal can be found in the 'pre-resurrection' and 'post-resurrection' passages in the Gospels.

Concerning whether Jesus claimed to be truly divine, Ehrman objects by arguing at various points in his book that such claims are only found in the

Gospel of John. He claims that they are not authentic because they are not multiply attested, not found in the Synoptic Gospels and do not pass the test of dissimilarity as they express the view that the author of the Gospel of John seems to hold. He also notes that, although we have a few of Jesus' sayings in Paul, we do not find Jesus claiming to be divine in Paul. He argues that the view that Jesus claimed to be divine is not contextually credible because we have no record of other Palestinian Jews claiming to be divine, and that if one were to claim that Jesus was the exception one would need very strong evidence, but we have only the sayings in the Gospel of John which Ehrman thinks is unreliable.

In reply, it has been pointed out in Chapter 1 that the criterion of dissimilarity is highly problematic. Contrary to the implications of this criterion, it is plausible to suggest that the author of John's Gospel held certain views about Jesus because he wanted to follow the views of his beloved master, i.e. Jesus himself! Moreover, it has been argued in Chapter 7 that various statements and actions of Jesus portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels can be understood as implicit claims to be truly divine as well, and that the author of the Gospel of John is merely reflecting on Jesus' indirect claims and making more explicit the full significance he finds in them. Likewise, Kruger explains,

We can agree that John's Gospel makes such claims to divinity even more direct - as the last Gospel it is not surprising that it offers a more sustained theological reflection on the person of Jesus. But, we should not confuse the directness of a claim with the existence of a claim. The historical evidence suggests the Synoptic Jesus and the Johannine Jesus both claimed to be the God of Israel.

Ehrman says, 'If Jesus really were equal with God from "the beginning," before he came to earth, and he knew it, then surely the Synoptic Gospels would have mentioned this at some point ... But, no, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke he does not talk about himself in this way'. However, this is an invalid form of argument from silence. Why must Jesus be portrayed by the Synoptics as saying 'I am equal with God from the beginning' if he knew it? Why can't Jesus be portrayed by the Synoptics as giving less direct but nevertheless clear and unambiguous claims to true divinity (see Chapter 7), and letting

the readers draw the implication? The latter might be more strategic and appropriate in certain circumstances given the strong Jewish reverence for God. It is true that the Synoptic Gospels do not explicitly declare Jesus as the pre-existent divine person who was on the Creator side of the Creator-creature divide (cf. John 1:1-18 and the 'I AM' saying in John 8:58). However, it can be argued that one of the intentions of the authors of the Synoptic Gospels is to emphasize instead how the disciples gradually came to realize, through Jesus' words and actions such as his 'mighty works' associated with God's creative acts (McDonough 2009), that he was within the being of God the Creator (e.g. Matt. 28:19, see Chapter 7). Given the Jewish monotheistic pre-understanding, this implicitly carries the connotation of his pre-existence on the Creator side of the divide.

As for Ehrman's objection that we do not find Jesus claiming to be divine in Paul, this is another invalid argument from silence. It is instructive to compare Ehrman's objection with Allison's observation that 1 Cor. 15:3-11 contains only a bare outline listing the individuals and groups to whom Jesus was supposed to have appeared, without mentioning the details of the appearances. Allison insightfully argues that, since it is implausible that the Christians in Corinth (or anywhere else) would have believed based on the scanty information in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 alone without knowing (or at least wanting to know) some of the details (e.g. what did these disciples see? Did they touch Jesus?), 1 Cor. 15:3-8 must have been a summary of traditional resurrection narratives which were told in fuller forms elsewhere. Likewise, it can be argued that the best explanation for Paul's failure to refer to important details concerning whether Jesus claimed to be truly divine - even though Paul himself regarded Jesus to be truly divine and was concerned to pass on Jesus' teachings (see Chapters 2 and 6) - is that these details were told elsewhere. That is, Paul knew that these details were already in circulation in the form of various traditional narratives, some of which might have been included in the Gospels later, for example, in Mark 14:62, Matt. 28:16-20 and John 20:28-29 (see the argument for the historical root of these passages in Chapter 7). It may well be that there was no controversy about these details among the earliest Christians - just as there was no controversy about Christ's divinity among the earliest Christians, as argued in earlier

chapters - therefore Paul did not see the need to discuss them. Ehrman's argument from silence assumes that there was such a need, but he has not excluded other possible explanations such as those offered here, thus his argument fails.

Ehrman might object that Paul did not say in his letters that 'a sizeable group of earliest Christians perceived that Jesus claimed to be divine, and they thought that God vindicated this claim by raising Jesus from the dead' was the cause of earliest highest Christology. In reply, Hurtado observes that the early Christians 'were more concerned to proclaim Jesus' significance and to express their devotion to him than to provide explanations of how they came to the convictions that prompted them to do so'. Thus the key question of this book has to be answered by other historical considerations, and I have argued that various historical considerations favour my proposal over the alternatives. If, as I have argued, a sizeable group of earliest Christians did perceive that Jesus claimed to be truly divine and the details of such event(s) were circulated elsewhere as traditional narratives which were well known to their audience, then there would have been no need for Paul to explain what was the cause of earliest highest Christology to his readers, since this would have been well known to them.

As noted earlier, Ehrman objects that the view that Jesus claimed to be divine is not contextually credible because we have no record of other Palestinian Jews claiming to be divine. Likewise, it has been claimed that no first-century Jew could have thought of a human being - much less himself - as the incarnation of God. For example, Goulder writes, 'Being a monotheist, Jesus cannot have thought of himself sanely as being Yahweh' (Goulder 1979a, 143). Wright replies that this claim is what two generations of history-of-religions scholarship had presupposed, not usually argued.

Now Ehrman does argue that, if one were to claim that Jesus was the exception one would need very strong evidence, but we have only the sayings in the Gospel of John. However, Ehrman's argument is problematic. He seems to presuppose that 'extraordinary claim requires extraordinary evidence', a philosophical principle which is famously associated with David Hume's objection to miracles (see his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*). In reply, other scholars have

warned that one must be careful not to exaggerate this sensible requirement into an insuperable epistemic barrier, as it would lead to the destruction of common sense and the failure to recognize extraordinary individuals and events. As philosopher Timothy McGrew explains,

The 19th century saw a proliferation of satires in which Humean scruples about accepting testimony for extraordinary tales were applied to the events of secular history, with consequences that are equally disastrous and humorous ... Whately's satire, which is the most famous, 'establishes' on the basis of many historical improbabilities that Napoleon never existed but was a mythic figure invented by the British government to enhance national unity.

The lesson is that, while one may legitimately require more evidence for an extraordinary story than for a mundane story, one must be careful not to exaggerate this sensible requirement into an insuperable epistemic barrier, for this would result in a standard that cannot be applied without absurdity in any other field of historical investigation (McGrew 2013). To avoid the absurdities, one should not require the evidence for 'extraordinary claim' to be extraordinary in the sense of forming an insuperable epistemic barrier, but rather sufficient for demonstrating the unreasonableness of alternative hypotheses. Thus, if someone claims that he saw an aeroplane, one could easily believe the person without demanding evidence that would demonstrate the unreasonableness of alternative hypotheses. However, if someone claims that he saw a UFO with aliens, then one would need to consider this more carefully by examining whether there are evidences to rule out alternative explanations (e.g. hoax, mis-identifications). I have argued that we do have evidences to indicate the implausibility of those explanations concerning the origin of divine Christology which do not involve Jesus claiming to be truly divine. And contrary to Ehrman, the case for thinking that Jesus claimed to be truly divine is not merely based on the sayings in the Gospel of John, but also on a number of sayings in the Synoptics and, more importantly, the historical considerations evidently in the letters of Paul, as argued previously. To do history properly, one must allow for the possibility of exceptions involving

extraordinary individuals, and the exception in this case is well justified by the evidences.

Concerning Goulder's claim, the fact that Jesus was a monotheist and held many beliefs that were the same as the Jews of his day does not imply that he could not have thought of and expressed beliefs about God (such as the belief that he and the Father are both within the one being of God, a belief which is consistent with monotheism as explained in previous chapters) that were beyond the Jews of his day. To claim that Jesus would have rejected the idea of himself as divine as blasphemous or that 'in the Jewish piety that Jesus shared, it would have been totally inappropriate for him to claim any status until it had been conferred by God' would be to foreclose what texts like Dan. 7:9-13 may well have permitted. Additionally, it would beg the question against various possibilities, such as the possibility that Jesus was indeed truly divine and knew this all along, and thus could have regarded it appropriate and in accordance with the will of the Father to claim this status in order to reveal his identity to his disciples.' Proponents of this view might argue that Ehrman's observation that we have no record of other Palestinian Jew claiming to be truly divine only goes to show how difficult it would have been to make up such a claim or to be mistaken about it, given the Jewish monotheistic context. In any case, the point here is that a historian qua historian should not beg the question for or against such possibilities. If one were to exclude a priori the possibility that Jesus was indeed truly divine such that he could have thought of and expressed beliefs about God that were beyond the Jews of his day, it would be to import theological and philosophical assumptions into his/her judgement. Likewise, if one were to exclude, on the basis of naturalistic assumptions against the resurrection, the possibility that the root of certain detail(s) in Matt. 28:16-20 and/or John 20:26-29 could have been a memory of the 'post-resurrection' Jesus giving a clear indication that he regarded himself as truly divine, this would be to import theological and philosophical assumptions into his/her judgement as well. Concerning the historical question whether Jesus claimed to be truly divine, a historian should make his/her judgement based on historical considerations — such as those listed below — rather than assuming beforehand whether divine intervention is or is not possible and then make

his/her judgement on the basis of such assumptions. The historical considerations which I have established in this book include the following:

- (1) The conviction that Jesus was truly divine was present among the earliest Christians.
- (2) This conviction was held by certain Jews who remained deeply committed to their monotheism with its strict Creator—creature divide.
- (3) The worship of another figure (i.e. Jesus) alongside God the Father was probably the greatest change for these Christian Jews.
- (4) Those who held this conviction included those traditionalist Jewish Christians who opposed Paul.
- (5) The earliest Christians did not avoid disagreements with one another in matters of importance, and traces of such disagreements can be found in the earliest Christian documents.
- (6) The conviction that Jesus was truly divine was widespread and persistent among the earliest Christians from the very beginning. There is no trace of disagreement concerning this in the earliest Christian documents. On the contrary, there are evidences for thinking that Paul considered the Jerusalem saints to be fully Christian, assumed the authority of Jerusalem leaders and proclaimed the same gospel concerning Jesus Christ; these evidences imply that Paul's highest Christology was also the Christology of the Jerusalem Christians.
- (7) Considering the strict Jewish monotheistic context of the earliest Christians, it is unlikely that the idea of worshipping a human figure whom some of them had followed closely for some time could have originated from them.
- (8) Even if it did, it is unlikely that other earliest Christians would have followed and maintained this idea, especially if they knew that Jesus himself did not have such an idea.
- (9) Additionally, there would have been those among Jesus' earliest disciples who would have defended Jesus' own

- views against such falsification; in which case there would not have been widespread acknowledgement that he was truly divine.
- (10) The idea that the human Jesus should be worshipped alongside God the Father while maintaining strict monotheism was a difficult idea to originate and maintain.
 - (11) It was a disadvantageous idea to originate.
 - (12) The earliest Christians were concerned to pass on the traditions of Jesus' teachings, and they would have been interested in what the historical Jesus himself thought or would think about the worship of him.
 - (13) The view that, in order to know a person's identity, it is important to know what he/she thinks about himself/herself and what he/she does, was present among the first-century Christians.
 - (14) The best historical explanation for a wide variety of peculiar beliefs and practices of the earliest Christians is that they were following Jesus.

With regard to the historical question concerning whether Jesus was perceived to have claimed to be truly divine, the above historical considerations, taken together, are evidences that he was. On the other hand, it has been explained in previous chapters that the Later Unfolding Theory (e.g. Dunn) and the Later Evolutionary Theory (e.g. Casey) are contradicted by Consideration 1, the Early Evolutionary Theory (e.g. Bousset) and the Resurrection and Ascension Theory (Ehrman) do not fit Considerations 2 to 14, and the Religious Experience Theory (Hurtado) and the Theological Deduction Theory (DeConick) do not fit Considerations 4 to 14.

It might be objected that Considerations 4, 6 and 9 are based on argument from silence. In reply, I have already defended the validity of using an argument from silence for these considerations in Chapters 5 and 6, and I have also shown that these considerations are not merely based on silence; on the contrary, there are also positive evidences which imply that Paul's highest Christology was also the Christology of the Jerusalem Christians. Moreover, Considerations 4, 6 and 9 are only one

part of my cumulative-case argument in this book. The other parts of my argument include the historical considerations numbered 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, and these do not involve argument from silence. Thus, my conclusion is not entirely dependent on the argument from silence. On the contrary, Considerations 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 are already sufficient to constitute a powerful cumulative case for my conclusion, and the argument from silence (together with the positive evidences for Considerations 4, 6 and 9) only adds to the case to make it even more powerful. Conversely, given the context of Considerations 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, the argument from silence is even more plausible.

It should be emphasized that these considerations should not be assessed separately when we examine the origin of divine Christology. Rather, they should be considered together as part of a cumulative case. Taken separately, one might find a number of exceptions in the history of religions to some of these considerations. For example, taken apart from the consideration of monotheism, we do find many exceptions to Consideration 8 in certain pantheistic or polytheistic cultures in which 'good', 'noble' and 'heroic' people are thought to become divine after their death, regardless of whether they regarded themselves as divine when they were alive. However, such 'exceptions' to Consideration 8 are irrelevant when we consider the case of Jesus, whose truly divine status was affirmed by Christian Jews who held to a strict form of monotheistic belief with its sharp Creator-creature divide (see Chapters 2 to 4).

In what follows, I shall consider two cases which are apparently more relevant and which are likely to be the two most striking potential counter-examples to my argument, one coming out from the Christian tradition and the other from the Jewish tradition. These two cases are the deification of the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie (1892-1975) by members of the Rastafarian faith, which claims hundreds of thousands of adherents worldwide, and the deification of Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1902-1994) by members of the Elokist Chabad Jews. These two cases are more relevant than the new religious movements discussed in Hurtado: The Qumran 'Teacher of Righteousness', Muhammad, Baha Ullah, Guru Nanak, and the American native 'Ghost Dance' and 'Handsome Lake' movements.

Although these movements involve religious experiences generating modifications in devotional practice, they do not involve a deification of human figure against his/her own will in a monotheistic tradition. Whereas the cases of Selassie and Schneersohn apparently do, and mystical religious experiences were involved as well. Examining these two cases might seem a strange task for biblical scholars, nevertheless the usefulness of such a procedure is well stated by Cameron and Miller:

Like anthropologists, biblical scholars can gain insight from the study of texts and cultures that appear to be strange, uncommon, or remote. 'For there is extraordinary cognitive power in ... "defamiliarization" - [in] making the familiar seem strange in order to enhance our perception of the familiar.' Since the origins of Christianity seem so self-evident to most students and scholars of the New Testament, what is needed is another point of departure, some other text or topic that will enable us to retest the discoveries of the past and see old truths in a new light.

Thus, I shall test my historical considerations and conclusion in light of these two 'strange cases'.

With regard to the case which came from the Christian tradition, the deification of Selassie is remarkable in a number of ways. The deification of other figures, such as ancient Roman emperors and the Indian Guru Sai Baba (1926-2011), occurred with relative ease in largely polytheistic or pantheistic cultures (even those so-called ancient pagan monotheists condoned the worship of many divine beings). By contrast, the deification of Selassie started among Jamaican Christians who were supposed to be monotheists. More shockingly, unlike those figures who claimed to be divine and who led their followers to hold such a view (e.g. Antiochus IV Epiphanes [c. 215 BC-164 BC]; Jim Jones [1931-1978]), the deification of this Ethiopian emperor seems to have been against the will of the emperor himself, and it began when he was still alive. It should be noted that cases of historical figures who claimed some kind of exalted status, such as being the brother of Jesus, should not be regarded as counter-examples to my conclusion. The reason is because I am arguing that Jesus was perceived to have made a claim to exalted status himself. To qualify as a potential counter-example, the historical figure must have been exalted against his will rather than in accordance with his

claim, and Selassie's case seems to fulfil this necessary condition. How did this remarkable event happen.

The main event which led to Selassie's deification was the 'prophetic' preaching of Marcus Garvey (1887—1940), who exhorted the oppressed Jamaicans to 'Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King; he shall be the Redeemer'. Together with Selassie's coronation in 1930 in front of representatives from many nations, his declaration of himself to be in the line of King Solomon and his taking of the names Haile Selassie I (Might of the Trinity), 'King of Kings' and 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah', many Jamaicans came to think of him as the fulfilment of messianic prophecy and even God incarnate. While Rastafarians have been interested to pass on certain teachings of Selassie (e.g. his speeches), many of them interpreted Selassie's denial of divinity as an expression of his humility and wisdom. An objector to my proposal might therefore argue that the case of Selassie provides a rare, but compelling counter-example to my claim that the considerations which I have listed above warrant the conclusion that Jesus claimed to be truly divine.

On closer examination, however, certain problems emerge concerning this potential counter-example. Scholars have noted that, in the years prior to the emergence of Rastafarianism, Afrocentric kinds of Christian beliefs and cultic practices, including worship of sky-bound spirits, angels and archangels alongside the Triune God, had separated from orthodox Christianity and become dominant in Jamaica. The subsequent preaching of the deity of Selassie was informed by this Afro-Christian occulture and by a strongly immanentist theology in which the divine was understood to be present within all people. One of the Rastafarians' earliest leaders, Leonard Howell, also claimed to be divine himself. Rastafarian religiosity is characterized by a focus on the individual's mystical links with God and the cosmic energy called earth-force; it de-emphasizes dogma and social organization. The above-mentioned factors made it easier for the idea of Selassie's divinity to originate and be widely accepted. By contrast, as argued in previous chapters, the earliest Christian Jews were deeply committed to a strict form of monotheism with its clear Creator-creature divide (Considerations 2, 3, 4, 7 and 10), and there is no

indication that their leaders such as Peter and Paul claimed to be divine.

With respect to Consideration 14, it is noteworthy that a wide variety of peculiar Rastafarian beliefs did not originate from Selassie in Ethiopia, rather they originated in faraway Jamaica under the leadership of Howell and others who developed several central beliefs and practices, such as the sacramental use of cannabis, from a range of sources. Mystical experiences seem to have been more important for many Rastafarians than finding out from Selassie who he thought he was. Nevertheless, with respect to Considerations 5, 6 and 9, there have been traces of discussion and disagreement among the claimed followers of Selassie within forty years after his death concerning whether he was truly divine. Certain Rastafarians such as members of the 'Twelve Tribes of Israel' sect who have continued to honour Selassie have nevertheless denied that he was divine. Of course, if we define Rastafarians as those who regard Selassie as divine, then the members of this sect would not be considered Rastafarians, but this would then be a circular argument against my consideration (there are nevertheless some others who have ceased from calling themselves Rastafarians altogether because of Selassie's denial of his divinity). As explained, I avoid circularity in my argument by defining 'Christians' broadly as 'those who claimed to follow Jesus' rather than as 'those who regarded Jesus as truly divine'. It is also significant that the overwhelming majority of Selassie's supporters in Ethiopia, who knew him better and followed him more closely than those in faraway Jamaica, do not regard him as divine, and there are traces of disagreements between these two groups. For example, the former group has condemned the Jamaican Rastafarians' deification of Selassie as madness. This is unlike the case of Jesus, in which the acknowledgement that he was truly divine was widely held by his earliest disciples, which included those who had followed him closely for some time in Palestine.

Let us consider the second case, the deification of Schneersohn within the Jewish tradition. Concerning this tradition, it has been noted in previous chapters that there is no example of cultic practice of worship (rather than merely literary speculation) of human figures in Second Temple Judaism that is

analogous to the worship of Jesus. One could hardly find any such examples in the subsequent history of Judaism either. Although there were many messianic figures such as Judas Maccabeus (d. 160 BCE), Theudas (?-46 CE), Simon Bar Kokhba (d. 135), Abu Isa (eighth century) and Abraham Abulafia (1240—c.1291) (Lenowitz 1998), these were not regarded by their followers to be on the Creator side of the Creator—creature divide but merely as human agents of God. A minority of followers of Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676) came to regard him and his supposed successor Barukhia Russo (d. 1720 or 1721) to be Messiah and divine. However, their beliefs could hardly be considered as strictly monotheistic since they distinguished Zevi and Russo from the supreme God who was thought to have no concern for this world (it is also interesting to note that they believed that there was a higher form of Torah which commanded them to practise incest and adultery). Additionally, Zevi and Russo had made exalted claims about themselves prior to their exaltation by these followers, and therefore they cannot be regarded as genuine counter-examples to my proposal that Jesus was perceived to have made exalted claims about himself.

A more noteworthy case is that of Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, an outstanding rabbi ('Rebbe') and popular leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. A personality cult grew around him, a proportion of his followers exalted him as the Messiah ('Moshiach) and a tiny minority of extremists (the Elokists) even considered him to be divine. Remarkably, this started among Jews who were supposed to be monotheists and against the will of Schneersohn himself.

Nevertheless, on closer inspection it is observed that the Chabad doctrines, which had originated centuries earlier, had already compromised the traditional Jewish monotheistic Creator—creature divide by developing a theosophical system in which all things in the world are permeated by a divine element and which denies that the world is a distinct entity from the divine essence. Even then, many Chabad leaders would have felt uncomfortable with the deification of human beings, and it is noteworthy that the Elokists constitute only a tiny minority of Schneersohn's followers. By contrast, as argued in earlier chapters, there was widespread agreement that Jesus was truly divine

among the earliest Christians who affirmed the traditional Jewish monotheistic Creator—creature divide. More importantly, in a manner consistent with Consideration 9, Schneersohn's emissaries have fiercely defended the views of Schneersohn himself by criticizing those who exalted his status. A statement issued by the Central Committee of Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbis in United States and Canada on 19 February 1998 provides an illuminating confirmation of the predictions of the considerations which I listed. In that statement, the highest ranked leaders of the movement condemned the deification of any human being as 'contrary to the core and foundation of the Jewish faith', and they mentioned that 'The preoccupation with identifying [the deceased] Rebbe as Moshiach is clearly contrary to the Rebbe's wishes.' By contrast, there is no indication that the strict monotheistic Jewish leaders of the earliest Christian movement (i.e. the Twelve, James or Paul) condemned the deification of Jesus as 'contrary to the core and foundation of the Jewish faith', and there is no indication that they mentioned that 'the preoccupation with identifying the deceased Jesus as Messiah or as truly divine is clearly contrary to Jesus' wishes'. On the contrary, there were evidences of widespread agreement that he was truly divine.

Hence, instead of being genuine counter-examples to the considerations which I have listed, these two fascinating cases actually serve to illustrate the strength of these considerations, taken together. One might object that historical figures sometimes become the object of religious worship because this helps the preservation of group coordination efficiency for groups above a certain size-threshold (citing the example of Rastafarianism along with others such as Roman imperial worship, the deification of Aztec emperors, Egyptian pharaonic gods and ancestor worship). However, the preservation of group coordination efficiency is clearly not the only consideration relevant to deification, and it may be overridden by other considerations, such as beliefs concerning a strict Creator—creature divide. As noted earlier, it is significant that there is hardly any example of cultic worship of human figures in Second Temple Judaism and in the subsequent history of Judaism, even though this might have helped the preservation of group coordination efficiency in certain conditions. Additionally, even if deification

occurs, there would likely have been evidences of disagreements rather than widespread acknowledgement among the earliest followers, if this leader himself had not claimed to be truly divine. It is true that factors such as social oppression, mystical experiences and charismatic leadership can spark remarkable transformation of beliefs among certain people, sometimes even to the extent of going beyond and contrary to the views of those leaders concerning their own identities. However, as illustrated by the case of Schneersohn, there would likely have been a significant number of earliest followers who had heard from those charismatic leaders themselves and who would defend the views of their beloved leaders against a falsification of their identities.

The above-mentioned considerations, together with the previously mentioned dissimilarities between the cases of Schneersohn and Selassie and that of Jesus, the rarity of potential counter-examples and the lack of any genuine counter-example, indicate that Jesus must have been perceived by the earliest Christians to have made exalted claims about himself. Following the good historical methodology of assessing what is the best explanation for a set of historical phenomena and considerations, it is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the most plausible explanation which can address all fourteen considerations adequately is that the earliest Christians regarded Jesus as truly divine, because they thought it was God's demand which was known in the following way: A sizeable group of earliest Christians perceived that Jesus claimed and showed himself to be truly divine, and they thought that God vindicated this claim by raising Jesus from the dead. From a historical perspective, this is the best explanation for the origin of divine Christology.

['Two Scrubby Travellers': A psychoanalytic view of flourishing and constraint in religion through the lives of John and Charles Wesley](#) by Pauline Watson [Routledge, 9781138241046]

The ways in which people change and grow, and learn to become good, are not only about conscious decisions to behave well, but about internal change which allows a loving and compassionate response to others. Such change can take place in psychotherapy; this book explores whether similar processes can occur in a religious context.

Using the work of Julia Kristeva and other post-Kleinian psychoanalysts, change and resistance to change are examined in the lives of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and his brother Charles, the greatest English hymn-writer. Their mother's description of them as young men as 'two scrubby travellers', was a prescient expression indicating their future pilgrimage, which they negotiated through many struggles and compromises; it points towards the 'wounded healer', a description which could be applied to John in later years. The use of psychoanalytic thought in this study allows the exploration of unconscious as well as conscious processes at work and interesting differences emerge, which shed light on the elements in religion that promote or inhibit change, and the influence of personality factors.

['Two scrubby travellers': A psychoanalytic view of flourishing and constraint in religion through the lives of John and Charles Wesley](#) enriches our understanding of these two important historical figures. It questions the categorising of forms of religion as conducive to change and so 'mature', and other forms as 'immature', at a time when many, particularly young people, are attracted by fundamentalist, evangelical forms of belief. This book will be essential reading for researchers working at the intersection of psychoanalysis and religious studies; it will also be of interest to psychotherapists and psychoanalysts more generally, and to researchers in the philosophy of religion.

Excerpt: Nathan, the Old Testament prophet, knew that self-deception was easy and ubiquitous and that seeing ourselves as we are was more challenging. King David had lusted after and bedded Bathsheba, and then engineered the death of her husband Uriah by putting him in the forefront of a battle. Nathan told him a parable (2 Samuel 12:1-13). A rich man who owned a flock of sheep would not kill one of his own sheep to feed a traveller but took the only possession of a poor man, his beloved 'little ewe lamb'. When he heard the parable, David was outraged. He said that the rich man deserved to die and should be made to restore the lamb fourfold. Nathan replied simply, 'Thou art the man'.

This book is about the struggle to see ourselves as we are, as it might take place in both a psychotherapy and a religious context. It arose

from my experience working as a psychiatrist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist in an acute hospital setting. I worked with patients who often made contact with the service at times of crisis. This meant that the old-fashioned luxury of being able to select people as 'suitable' for psychoanalytic psychotherapy was not usually available. Many of them had severe personality disorders, addictions or psychosomatic disorders; there were many who had 'borderline' or 'narcissistic' pathology, and some who might be termed 'difficult to reach'.

My experience confirmed what Joseph had found: that such patients, if they were engaged psychotherapeutically, were often able to begin to know themselves better only after a prolonged struggle with intense and negative feelings towards the therapist. It was not uncommon for both patient and therapist to have a sense of being pushed to the brink of catastrophe and to have a sense of a life-and-death battle. I also met a different group of people: they saw themselves as deeply committed Christians, who subscribed to the Christian ideals of love and forgiveness, but, in spite of these beliefs and their regular religious practices, were unable to give up destructive behaviour towards themselves and/or others. They would either turn a blind eye to the effects of their behaviour or attempt to legitimise it by invoking God's will. They felt that their actions were good, morally right and justifiable; as a result, they saw no necessity for change.

Members of the first group may or may not have been willing to engage with psychotherapy, should they be offered it. The second group would usually see no need for it, expecting that any necessary change would be identified and brought about in the context of their religious experience. On first acquaintance, the people in these groups would appear to have little in common, but in fact, like King David, they share considerable resistance to accessing unconscious conflicts, wishes and motives.

The book explores possible elements in religion which might lead to change by facilitating access to the unconscious. Are there processes within an individual's relationship with religion that can be compared to the facilitating elements in psychotherapy, which allow increased awareness of deep truths about the self, and lead to freedom to act in more loving ways? Are there forms of religion which are more likely to facilitate change

than others, and are there some which tend to hinder change and growth?

My concern is not only with those whose lives are constrained by mental disorders of some kind or by their own extreme destructive behaviour but also with all those, including ourselves, who turn a blind eye to some of our hurtful behaviour and who feel a need to grow and to live life 'more abundantly'.

I explore these questions using post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory and particularly the psychoanalytic concepts of Julia Kristeva, the French psychoanalyst and professor of linguistics. Although Kristeva privileges art, poetry and psychoanalysis over religion as enablers of growth and change (offering what she calls 'alternatives to narcissism'), she is interested in the personal use of Christian symbolism by believers, and her insights are enlivening and enlightening but also disruptive. I use her theory in relation to two specific examples: the lives and personalities of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and his brother Charles, thought by many to be the greatest English hymn writer. The book is titled *Two Scrubby Travellers* because their mother described them as such in an affectionate and intimate way, but it also represents two aspects of their lives. 'Travellers' is a recognition that they were, like most people, on a pilgrimage through life; and 'scrubby' indicates their humanity, their ways of dealing with the inevitable struggles and compromises on the way. It points towards the 'wounded healer', a description which could be applied to John in particular in later years.

This exploration of the Wesley brothers has been undertaken to try to learn more about how the personalities of different people affect the way they interact with the religious cultures surrounding them. Are there forms of religion which are more likely to encourage more 'mature' or 'immature' kinds of religious experience, as has been previously suggested by psychologists? And to what extent do people use or exploit aspects of their religious culture, of whatever sort, in helpful or unhelpful ways, according to their own particular needs? Both of these questions are of great significance at a time when large numbers of people, particularly young people, continue to embrace 'fundamentalist' forms of religion, traditionally thought by many psychologists to promote 'immature' relating. The purpose of the

study is to shed light on these difficult questions. Theological and psychoanalytic ideas about the human struggle to maturity and goodness are used to elucidate differences in the brothers' lives. By using Kleinian, post-Kleinian and Kristevan theory, elements have been highlighted which would have been less evident in a study using the developmental methods that are more often used in the study of religion, in which there is less emphasis on the unconscious.

I have chosen the Wesley brothers because Methodism is the form of Christianity with which I am most familiar and because early Methodism as preached by John and Charles Wesley would be categorised by some psychologists and psychoanalysts as an 'immature' form of religion. An extreme form of this view is found in the work of someone who is not a psychologist or a psychoanalyst but a Marxist social historian, E.P. Thompson. Thompson (who came from a Methodist missionary family) saw Methodism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as damaging and oppressive, as enforcing obedience and submission through fear and as sapping revolutionary fervour from the gullible masses. He suggested that emotion was seen by Methodists as dangerous to the social order and that it was safe to release it, only harmlessly, in a religious meeting, usually after a rousing sermon, as 'a ritualised form of psychic masturbation'. If Thompson is right, this form of religion would be expected to lead to an 'immature', infantilising and stultifying response, rather than to an opportunity for growth among its believers.

John and Charles Wesley were both Anglican priests. They devoted their lives to the reform of the church into which they had been ordained, and which was, in many places, lacking in dedication and inspiration. They travelled through the whole country, preaching and writing, and clearly had a powerful effect on many people, especially those who felt themselves ignored by the church. John Wesley was anxious at the outset not to separate from the Church of England, insisting that his followers should attend their parish church, but his field preaching, and his conduct of worship in the fledgling Methodist societies, provided many with their first hope and purpose in a society in which they seemed to be ignored and forgotten. This may have been interpreted by Thompson as frustrating

a natural aspiration towards a necessary revolution, but this study shows the real situation to be more complicated.

Much has previously been written about the Wesley brothers, and a great deal of it is hagiographical. Adam Clarke, in his *Memoirs of the Wesley Family*, ended by saying that never 'since the days of Abraham and Sarah, and Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, has there ever been a family to which the human race has been more indebted'. In the present book, I hope to avoid such unqualified praise and to question some of the myths and legends. The use of psychoanalytic theory addresses not only conscious but possible unconscious factors which may have affected their lives. In order to achieve this, I have relied as far as possible on their own writings and those of their mother, Susanna. I have also made use of letters and other information from their contemporaries.

It may seem foolhardy to attempt to understand the inner worlds of two people whose lives extended throughout most of the eighteenth century; there are obvious hazards in having to rely on material, some of which is inevitably second-hand. But the present study has the advantage, unusual at this distance in time, of access to the extensive writings about the Wesleys' early lives by their mother, as well as their own personal journals and letters. Although the ideas and speculations drawn from these sources cannot be checked out repeatedly with each brother, as would happen if they were in therapy, and although there can be no information gained from non-verbal or counter-transference sources, there are records of a wide range of interactions with family members, with other people, with their work and with religious and cultural elements. These can be used to add to weight to the suppositions made from their subjective writings. In many ways, the Wesleys' situation is a ready-made experimental setting for a comparison between the two brothers. While they had very similar cultural, educational, religious and family influences, their individual experiences within the family would have been different. In addition to their genetic make-up, these individual experiences, particularly with their parents, would have contributed significantly to their personality differences. There is sufficient documentation and detail about their early lives for this to be usefully explored, and it is these

personality factors which are of interest in comparing their responses to their faith.

The book is separated into two parts: Part I (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) outlines psychoanalytic understandings of an individual's growth to emotional, mental and moral maturity. It is concerned mainly with mechanisms of change in the early life of an individual and in psychotherapy. In addition, it looks at parallel opportunities for change in a religious context, attempting to understand them psychoanalytically. It includes a discussion of some forms of religion which in conventional terms might be expected to encourage defensiveness rather than growth.

Chapter 1 describes the context in which ideas about growth and change in psychoanalysis and in theology have developed. It focuses on Melanie Klein, the child psychoanalyst who wrote between the 1920s and the 1960s, and Julia Kristeva (the main theorist used in this book), who was greatly influenced by Klein. It looks at some parallel changes in psychoanalytic and theological thinking in the post-modern era, and also at the changes in psychoanalytic attitudes to religion over the second half of the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the search for 'goodness' and 'maturity' in religion and in psychoanalysis. It examines what is meant by 'growth' and 'goodness' in theology (through the work of Rowan Williams (2000) and Ellen Charly (1997)) and in psychoanalysis. It concentrates on the relationship between ideas about 'growth' or 'development' and ideas of the 'good'. Two elements necessary to promote growth and change emerge from Waddell's study, and these two facilitators of change are used in subsequent chapters as a framework to re-examine important psychoanalytical ideas about development.

Chapter 3 is concerned with first of these facilitators: the interaction with an emotionally available object.¹ It outlines ideas about the development of the moral sense in the context of a relationship with a good object, as they have evolved through Kleinian thought and subsequently. Although I have taken a mainly Kleinian focus, relevant, illuminating insights are included from Fairbairn's object-relations theory, Kohut's self-psychology and from analysts in the Independent

tradition such as Winnicott and Bollas. The chapter also considers some of the consequences for a subject's relationships with other people, philosophies or religion, when these processes go awry.

In Chapter 4 the second of the facilitators of change is explored more fully. This relates to the search for increased awareness of the 'deep truth' about the self, achieved in repeated confrontation with the truth in everyday interactions with other people in life, or in the particularities and detail of therapy. Truth is described as food for mental growth, but accessing the 'deep truth' about the self is no easy matter. It depends on the capacity to 'symbolise', which in psychoanalytic theory includes not only the use of material symbols and rituals but also the capacity to conceptualise and verbalise unconscious content.

This chapter is concerned with the development of this capacity and also with the ways in which the use of symbols can facilitate the search for 'deep meaning'. It introduces Kristeva's understanding of very early infantile development, and her view that culture (religious or secular) must provide opportunities to 'symbolise' disturbing unconscious contents arising from pre-verbal experiences, if an individual is to grow and develop. Her thoughts on the entry into what she terms the 'symbolic' realm (a realm of language and rules), through identification with a loving, supportive object, which facilitates the separation from the mother/child dyad, add another layer of understanding to the more conventional ideas about the relationship with a good object. Her emphasis on the need for a dialogue between the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic' (a term she uses idiosyncratically to indicate the realm of the body, of sensation and fragmented affect) is important for the study of how religion might promote growth.

In Chapter 5, following the analysis of processes of change in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, four elements emerge which are important in facilitating the process of growth. They are all important in the work of Kristeva and can be understood in her terms. In this chapter, they are considered in relation to religion.

They include interactions with transforming objects; opportunities to experience 'intersections' (between the universal and the particular, the

known and the unknown, the human and the divine, or the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic'); the use of religious symbols, narratives, sacraments and rituals to symbolise the 'semiotic' (this section is mainly concerned with Kristeva's thought on symbolism and ritual, and introduces her concept of the 'abject'); and the availability of triadic spaces.

In Part II (Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10), the lives of John and Charles Wesley are explored in the light of the theories about growth and transformation discussed in Part I.

Chapter 6 outlines their shared cultural and religious heritage and their family background. An examination of the sermons and the character of their maternal grandfather, Dr Samuel Annesley, an eminent dissenting preacher, provides evidence of the beliefs, values and expectations which they inherited, many of which appear in their writings and those of their mother. Her writings are the source of a great deal of information about their immediate family, early experience and education.

Chapters 7 and 8 explore the individual lives, relationships and spiritual journeys of the Wesley brothers. Using psychoanalytic theory, and particularly Kristevan theory, an attempt is made to understand their mental structures and psychological defence mechanisms from their own writings and from the writings of others close to them. Ways in which these personality features affected their responses to the religious faith they shared are considered.

Chapter 9 explores the theological differences between the Wesley brothers. It is concerned with their conversion experiences, their attitudes to mysticism, their ideas on Christian Perfection and their positions on the meaning of suffering and on the Trinity. As far as is possible, these are related to their psychological needs.

Chapter 10 draws together the findings from these chapters, outlining the differences between the two brothers and the implications of these differences in understanding the ways in which individual personality factors and psychological defences influence the practice of religion. The merits of employing Kristeva as the main theorist in the book are considered, and her privileging of art and psychoanalysis over religion is readdressed in the light of the findings. This final chapter also returns to the classification of forms of belief by

psychologists as 'mature' and 'immature', which is inevitably dismissive and denigrating of 'immature' forms. The differences between two people within the same religious context demonstrate that each person's response is complicated and idiosyncratic and that classification of forms of religion in terms of their being conducive to mature or immature relating is too simplistic to be useful.

[Augustine in Context](#) edited by Tarmo Toom
[Cambridge University Press, 9781107139107]

[Augustine in Context](#) assesses the various contexts - historical, literary, cultural, spiritual - in which Augustine lived and worked. The essays, written by an international team of scholars especially for this volume, provide the background against which Augustine's treatises should be read and interpreted. They are organized according to a rationale which moves from an introduction to the person (the so-called 'personal context') to the contexts of Augustine's works and ideas, starting from the intellectual setting and extending to the socio-political realm. Collectively the essays highlight the embeddedness of Augustine in the world of late antiquity and the interdependence of his discourse with contemporary forms of social life. They shed new light on one of the most important figures of the western canon and facilitate a more enlightened reading of his writings.

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Excerpt:

Augustine in Context and Augustine on Context

Augustine has had a formative role for Christianity and Christian culture. Everyone who has something to do with western thinking and/or theology has been influenced by him in some way, either directly (through Augustine's works) or indirectly (through the works of those who have read Augustine). David Tracy has assessed, "In one sense, any western Christian thinker (and a good number of post-Christian secular thinkers) is a part of the history of the effect of the texts of Augustine. Some 5 million words from Augustine's pen are extant, which is vastly more than we have from any other writer from antiquity. It is not to say that others have not contributed to the shaping of western Christianity but rather that only a few have been as influential as Augustine has been. As Phillip Cary once remarked, much of what people say or think as Christians carries a little tag, "Made by Augustine."

Augustine in Context: Some Guiding Principles

The very act of writing an introduction is creating a context - a context of convictions and circumstances that have generated the project Augustine in Context. To paraphrase a contemporary literary theorist, the idea or impetus behind this volume is "to map the contours of the discourse environment in which [Augustine's writings were] produced and consumed." Thus a key assumption in envisioning this book has been that context, which relates communicative actions and their surroundings to literary texts, is crucial for comprehending any text.

Cambridge's prolific series "Literature in Context" seems to be guided by certain interests and presuppositions in recent literary studies, such as those of New Historicism, which take texts to be inseparable from the context in which they were written (i.e., a "thick description"). That is, texts are perceived primarily as the products of the social circumstances of their creation. Consequently, historical contexts are not perceived as

textindependent "backgrounds," some sort of external restrictions on linguistic utterances, but rather as part of the literary phenomenon itself. They are con-"texts" that help to determine the semantic coordinates of what has been said.

Extending this series, its underlying assumptions, and guiding principles to religious studies (in this case, to Augustine), certain parallels between the two respective disciplines, literary studies and patristics, can be detected. In the second half of the twentieth century and as far as methodology is concerned, first social history and then cultural anthropology dominated the field of patristics - hence the heightened attention to contextual studies (i.e., to social and religiohistorical rather than to theological research). Scholarly trends have emphasized the embeddedness of early Christian authors in the world of late antiquity, the interdependence of their discourse with the social forms of life, and their sharing of the common "presupposition pools" with the larger culture. Christian history and culture have been increasingly seen as part of and deeply situated in Roman history and culture. This means that recently the early Christian texts have been studied as literature - a particular medium of communication vis-à-vis a message with an extrasystemic reference - that provides a key to the social realities of the time.

Here is how Augustine in Context proceeds. Part I intends to introduce Augustine. The first question to be asked is, "How do we know about him?" and "What might be the implications of knowing him the way we do?" Most of Augustine's later biographies are based on his Confessions (his early life until becoming a bishop) and Possidius' sympathetic Vita (his life as a bishop and his controversies). Accordingly, Part I examines Augustine's life and public career from his birth and upbringing until his death. Although literary studies (e.g., New Criticism) have made it efficiently clear that an author's biographical data are not absolutely necessary for understanding his or her texts - in fact, they might be quite irrelevant (see below) - various author- and context-oriented approaches have strongly disagreed with this contention.

Augustine was a man of words and, therefore, particular attention is given to language and literary contexts. Since Augustine is mostly known for his writings and ideas rather than for his

personal qualities, Part II investigates the contexts that concern Augustine's literary activity and thought. For deeper understanding and better appreciation, his intellectual quests and pursuits should be understood in the light of the existing intellectual culture and his texts in the web of interrelationships with other writings of the period.

Part III attempts to remind the interpreters of Augustine that he always strived to "know God and the soul [de Deo, de anima]" (Sol. 1.2.7). So did many others, but with rather different results. Therefore, it is important to consider the contexts of competing worldviews without which it would be virtually impossible to understand certain (reactionary) emphases in Augustine's deliberations. Because his contribution to and impact on his contemporary and subsequent (philosophical) theology definitely outweigh his contribution to and impact on any other field of study, heightened attention is given to the religious contexts of his treatises. Such "privileging of religion" is justified, I believe, by Augustine's own privileging of religion. After all, most people are not reading Augustine to find a fourth-fifth century understanding of family and economics. Fewer still seek out Augustine's texts in order to get an idea about imperial correctional facilities or healthcare systems. Rather, most people are reading Augustine for the subject matter that he discusses, for certain "big questions" of theology and philosophy, that is, for religious insight. Yet the bishop of Hippo and his numerous religious writings have still to be located within a society/culture of late antiquity with everything it had to offer because particular circumstances definitely shaped his personality, convictions, and literary output. Social conventions and expectations just have to be in place for any meaningful communication to happen. Even the somewhat rebellious Augustine could not entirely free himself from such things or make his texts immune to what was going on around him.

In a sense, Part IV continues Part III by extending the investigation to some other aspects of the social reality of Augustine's time. No one escapes the impact of sociopolitical realities, no matter whether that impact is appreciated or dreaded. Augustine's activities, too, are inevitably embedded in the circumstances of his time.

Several previous volumes in the series "Literature in Context" have a section on reception history of a

given author. Because of the recent publication of a major 3 volume work on Augustine - [The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine](#) edited by Karla Pollmann, Willemien Otten (- it does not make good sense to attempt it again on a much lesser scale. However, because this megastudy does not say much about the very beginning of the reception history of Augustine, *Augustine in Context* attempts to fill the gap and focus on the beginning of this complicated process. Accordingly, Augustine is placed alongside his contemporary friends and foes who read him either with great enthusiasm or with deep suspicion. Although by the sixth century and for many Augustine had become Saint Augustine, the early reception of him may provide an interesting corrective to the widespread but naive impression that his authority was never questioned. This volume attempts to assist its readers in moving away from a still widespread perception of the "canonical" Augustine as a self-standing, transhistorical intellectual giant who was somehow above the mundane realities of his time.

The essays in this volume are about the context of Augustine and not about Augustine per se. The "Guidance Notes for Volume Editors" says, "The volume should not focus on accounts of the individual's actual work, but instead offer accounts of contextual issues, bringing in the work as necessary for illustration purposes." That is, the goal is to provide a set of possible contexts that are reconstructed - with some obvious exceptions in Parts I and V - from sources other than Augustine's works and yet pertinent for understanding his works. This is deliberate. In many cases, it helps to avoid the tendency of circular reasoning, where a context is reconstructed from Augustine's works and then his works are interpreted in the light of the context thus reconstructed. (This happens frequently in the case of ancient texts, especially when little or no comparative material is extant.)

Augustine in Context is written by experts in their fields and is intended for the larger audience, yet without ignoring the many scholars and students of Augustine. It provides a set of "glasses" (i.e., various contexts) through which the works of Augustine can be seen or "spaces" in which one can ponder about Augustine. In other words, the intention is not to put together another improved Companion to Augustine for Augustinian scholars.

Rather, the overall idea is to supply a set of possible (historical) contexts (none of which is the "master context," as the singular of the word "context" in the title might suggest) that are pertinent for understanding the literary output of the bishop of Hippo. In a sense, this book is a prolegomenon for reading Augustine's own works, that is, for a more nuanced reading of his works.

Perhaps it should also be clarified that neither the number nor the order of essays pretends to exhaust the possibilities. Neither do they suggest a hierarchy of importance or a claim to be comprehensive. Nevertheless, the organization of essays does have a rationale that moves from an introduction of the person (the so-called personal context) to the contexts of Augustine's works and ideas, starting from the intellectual setting and extending to the sociopolitical realm. The grouping of topics into Parts II, III,

and IV should also not give an impression that these thematic sections are somehow self-standing and independent entities. To have a section on political and social contexts is not to contend that politics and social circumstances would exist apart from culture or, for that matter, religions or nationality. The grouping also attempts to avoid, despite a separate section of religious contexts (e.g., Part III), a stark separation between "religious" and "secular" spheres, ideas, and material culture.

The essays, which at times inevitably overlap, are not edited for better coherence and consensus. Productive differences of opinion are deliberately allowed to stand because disagreement provides the necessary energy for generating further debate and research.

Some Further Issues

In the 380s, Ambrosiaster was adamant, "For to take things out of context is to sin" (i.e., it is to commit a hermeneutical "sin") (comm. on 1Tim 8-9). Indeed, there is much to gain from contextual study of ancient texts. For example, it tends to eliminate various anachronistic readings and prevents forcing Augustine to answer the questions he never raised. It is believed to provide both constraints on and possibilities for the meanings of his utterances. Nevertheless, there are some issues related to the concept of context that deserve mention for further consideration.

First, among theorists, there is really no consensus about what context as such is. Augustine in what? "Widely accepted standard definitions or theories on the context are not on the market." While everyone seems to acknowledge that context refers to the various aspects that are relevant for understanding a text or an utterance, defining "context" is usually confined to mere listing of its component parts. Yet how many textual and extratextual component parts need to be considered in order to have a context? How do we select them from a wide spectrum of possible contextual cues and on the basis of what to determine their relevance? In brief, context proves to be a rather elusive concept when one attempts to define it.

Second, contexts — whatever they are taken to be — are never objectively given, fixed, and ready to be used for everyone who would like to operate with them. This means that at least contexts for ancient writings are always reconstructions of later readers, and because of fragmentary evidence, they can never be reconstructed in their totality. As such, reconstructed contexts remain ever-mutable entities, already and inevitably contaminated with the presuppositions, biases, and interests of the one who reconstructs them for his or her own particular purposes. This amounts to saying that describing various contexts for Augustine's life and work may generate a false yet convenient feeling of assurance that finally one has found an objective interpretative device. However, such hermeneutical optimism needs to be tamed by careful acknowledgment of the provisional character of any reconstruction of a context.

Third, how much weight should be given to historical contexts for construing a meaning of a text? Although contextual interpretation has been emphasized, practiced, and highly praised for quite some time, it rests on certain philosophical assumptions about how meaning is constituted and raises, for example, the issue of the hermeneutical normativity of "original contexts." Yet an "original context" is arguably not some sort of super criterion for interpreting ancient texts because what an utterance meant in its historical context is not all that a given utterance can and has to mean. If one is to follow Grice, texts have context-independent semantic meanings and context-dependent pragmatic meanings.¹ This distinction helps, at least,

to understand the irrefutable fact that there are a whole lot of utterances and texts that communicate extremely well, although no one knows and will never know what their "original context" was. Is it not the case that Augustine's *Confessions*, for example, can be deeply meaningful even for the readers who know absolutely nothing about the text's provenance and the historical circumstances of its composition? This text "speaks to" and mesmerizes its readers even if they do not know the very century in which it was composed or by whom it was composed. "Classical" texts are particularly prone to multicontextualism. In short, finding a text meaningful does not necessarily presuppose the knowledge of the "original context" or the provenance of the text. Searching for the meaning of a text on a postcompositional level can yield equally remarkable results. Breed remarks, "The truth is that texts always leave their contexts, especially their putative original contexts, and contexts never seem to do anything to stop them. Actually, the situation is even worse: original contexts simply disappear into the mists of time while the texts romp around in the present." Furthermore, the "original context" is often believed to offer an important clue about authorial intention, and authorial intention is believed, in turn, to govern the meaning of a text or utterance. Yet again, literary studies have strongly questioned the age-old conviction that authorial intent always controls the meaning of a text. It has been proposed that what matters are the intrinsic and structural aspects of a literary work rather than its intended meaning and extratextual reference (e.g., Formalism). Augustine, for example, knew very well that often it was impossible to appeal to authorial intention. He wondered in *civ. Dei* 20.19, "We, who do not know what they [i.e., the addressees of the Book of Revelation] knew, are not able to arrive at the apostles' meaning even with an effort, and no matter how much we desire to do so." Again, "Which of us can discover [the meaning of the text of Genesis] with such assurance that he can confidently say, 'This is what Moses meant and this was his meaning in that narrative' ... I cannot see in Moses' mind that this is what he was thinking when he wrote this" (*conf* 12.14.33). While Augustine never questioned the hermeneutical priority of authorial intention or the fact that texts referred to something, he was very much aware of the complications that these notions entailed. Whether

one likes it or not, often an appeal to what is taken to be the authorial intent in the historical "original context" proves to be nothing but guesswork.

Fourth, the series "Literature in Context" also seems to give a definite preference to the contexts of a given author. Yet various possible contexts of readers may prove to be equally important. Even Augustine knew that the context of a reader mattered for discovering the meaning of an utterance. For example, in *s. Dom. mon.* 2.7.26, he argues that for eastern Christians the designation "daily bread" (*Mt* 6:11) cannot mean the Eucharist because they just do not celebrate the Eucharist daily. In this case, the context of the readers/interpreters restricts the semantic realm of a phrase. Likewise, the meanings of Augustine's own texts always evolve in the particular reading process and by particular readers, who carry their own interpretative contexts with them and consequently approach texts with their concerns and questions. Thus the contexts of an author are not the only ones that matter. The contexts of readers, too, have a determinative role for establishing meaning(s). "Understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well."

Augustine On Context

Although not sharing the ideologies behind New Historicism or any other modern "school," Augustine likewise emphasized the importance of context(s) and contextual interpretation. True, his deliberations concerned mostly the interpretation of Scripture, but they can also be applied to the reading of any ancient text, including his own.

First, Augustine advises an interpreter to consider the literary context of a word or an utterance. "The context of the scriptures customarily illuminates a given passage, when the words adjunct to the text in question are carefully examined" (*div. qu.* 69.2). Likewise, in *doc. Chr.* 3.2.2, he admonishes the interpreter to consider "the preceding and following passages" in case a statement is unclear or ambiguous - just like Cicero had instructed him, "[I]t must be shown that from what precedes and follows in the document the doubtful point becomes plain" (*Inv.* 2.40.117). For example, in *doc. Chr.* 2.12.18 and in order to determine how the particular word "calf" needs to be translated in *Wisd* 4:3, Augustine investigates the "words that follow." Or, in *s. Dom. mon.* 1.16.44, the meaning

of the designation "the rest" in 1 Cor 7:12 is ascertained by the next sentence. Again, detecting a contradiction between 1 Jn 1:8 and 3:9, he takes the phrase "He who has been born from God does not sin" as referring to a particular sin - a violation of charity (ep. Jo. 5.1-2, 7) - because the whole epistle "commends charity" (5.4; cf. 6.4).

For reading Augustine's own treatises, this means that his statements, too, have to be considered in their immediate literary setting (i.e., in the intratextual context or cotext). Progressively, they have to be considered also in the ever-enlarging settings of the particular treatise (i.e., in the infratextual context), Augustine's other treatises, Latin Christian literature, the literature of late antiquity, and so on (i.e., in the intertextual contexts) and finally also in the extratextual contexts (if these are not already bracketed together with a text).

Second, an interpreter also has to consider the situational context of an utterance. The larger life setting - or as the rhetorical manuals called it, *circumstantiae* - may provide a key for a more adequate understanding of what is said. For example, if one hears the words, "Quit pulling my leg!" one needs to know the life situation of this utterance for comprehending the request. One needs to know whether someone wants someone else to quit teasing him or her, whether people are wrestling, or whether there is an ongoing rescue operation. Situational context makes an utterance semantically specific and indicates how it is to be understood at that moment. In s. Dom. mon. 1.20.65, Augustine contends that the punishments mentioned in the Old Testament cannot be understood unless one becomes aware "of the mentality and the particular times that marked these deeds." Similarly, he urges, "We must pay careful attention to what befits places and times and persons, in order not to judge behavior rashly as infamous" (doc. Chr. 3.12.19).

Third, a personal context proves to be important as well. Because the intention of an author was given such importance for determining the meaning of a text, for adequate interpretation, ancient rhetoricians urged consideration of the whole life of an author. They stressed the importance of what can be called "personal context." Cicero wrote, "One ought to estimate what the writer meant from his other writings, acts, words, disposition, and in

fact his whole life" (Inv. 2.40.117). He elaborated, "For it is easy to estimate what is likely that the writer intended from the complete context and from the character of the writer [ex persona scriptoris], and from the qualities which are associated with certain characters" (Inv. 2.40.117). Augustine, for example, knew, on the basis of other canonical texts what Jesus, the evangelists, or Paul was likely to say, and often this helped him to make a decision about the intended meaning of an utterance. Obviously, the more information one has about the author and the greater the number of available writings, the easier it is to determine the author's "personal context."

Perhaps a special difficulty with (ancient) written texts should be pointed out here as well. Namely, there is a certain immediacy to oral communication - the context is present at hand, and the way something is said directs the hearers' understanding. Participants in a conversation construct context in the process of communication. Even if misunderstanding occurs, they can always ask for a clarification. Just as Augustine says, "[Moses] is not now before me, but if he were, I would clasp him and ask him" (conf 11.3.5). That is, in oral communication, the linguistic medium is never separated from the person using it. There is no such thing as a living discourse that would exist independently of the speaker and the context of the utterance. But things are rather different in the case of written texts, where everything, including life situation, authorial intention, tone of voice, and other such interpretative clues, is not easily accessible and sometimes not available at all. This posits an extra difficulty for interpreters of written texts, especially anonymous and ancient texts. Periods, commas, question marks, and grammatical constructions can be of some help here, but in the case of written text, an interpreter does not have the help of the supplementary "illocutionary acts" (i.e., the nonlinguistic communication devices). Augustine realizes that when authorial intention is not explicitly stated and when contextual clues, such as phrasing (doc. Chr. 3.2.2-4.8), intonation (civ. Dei 16.6; doc. Chr. 3.3.6), and gesticulation (en. Ps. 34[2].11) happen to be unavailable, an interpreter cannot have any extra help from such illocutionary acts.

For [Augustine in Context](#), the first, the literary context, is relatively less important because the

current volume does not assess Augustine's works (except some essays in Parts I and IV). The second, the situational (or historical) context, is the center of attention in Parts II, III, and IV. The third, the personal context, is reconstructed in Part I.

[Augustine: Conversions to Confessions](#) by Robin Lane Fox [Basic Books, 9780465022274]

"This narrative of the first half of Augustine's life conjures the intellectual and social milieu of the late Roman Empire with a Proustian relish for detail." --New York Times

In [Augustine](#), celebrated historian Robin Lane Fox follows Augustine of Hippo on his journey to the writing of his Confessions. Unbaptized, Augustine indulged in a life of lust before finally confessing and converting. Lane Fox recounts Augustine's sexual sins, his time in an outlawed heretical sect, and his gradual return to spirituality. Magisterial and beautifully written, [Augustine](#) is the authoritative portrait of this colossal figure at his most thoughtful, vulnerable, and profound.

Augustine is the person about whom we know most in the ancient world. Sixteen hundred years later, he can still be followed in changing detail through his own voluminous writings. For that reason alone, he is a fascinating study, inexhaustible evidence for a world both like and unlike our own. It still amazes me that we can read the very words of himself and his debaters on exact days as far away as 13 November 386 or 28 August 392. The ancient world is suddenly very close to us. Augustine is also a Christian and is immediate to many readers for that reason too. When I began this book, both the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury were distinguished scholars of his thought and context. I do not share their, or Augustine's, faith, but, like them, I am intrigued by his restless intelligence and his exceptional way with words. My greatest debt, therefore, is to Augustine, who is always articulate about himself and his beliefs. I have often wondered how he would write to me, belittling my worldly multiplicity, but failing, I think, to dislodge it.

Like many others across the world, I have been inspired and sustained in my interest in him by Peter Brown's superb biography, first published in 1967. As he is the first to realize, the continuing flood of modern studies and even, remarkably, some newly found evidence alter some of its

viewpoints after nearly fifty years. He has outlined in a second edition how he would adjust to them and I have remained aware that he would have done so in ways which I am not even able to see. I have said less on guilt and more on mysticism and I have presented differently Augustine's relation to Neoplatonism and to a 'lost future' in his middle age. I have had the luxury of much more space, as my book stops with the Confessions. I have therefore given more attention to the disputed details of his conversions and much more to the next eleven years of his writings and actions before he began to confess. I have a different view of the immediate context of the Confessions, their genre and their length of composition. I also have more to say about the last three books, ones which perplex initial readers but which I have come to value most.

There are many fine short books on Augustine, from Marrou to Chadwick, Trapé to Te Selle. I saw no reason to add another, so I opted for a long book, based on my own reading of all Augustine's surviving writings until September 397. I have deliberately minimized my use of his writings after that date, partly for a practical reason, my relative ignorance, partly because myopia has advantages, as he himself composed the Confessions without knowing what he would write later.

I have planned the book with a clear structure for which a musical analogy may be helpful. Throughout, it is composed as a biographical symphony whose theme is Augustine's life up to the age of forty-three.

The first half, or movement, is mostly about conversions, with confessing as an undercurrent. The second half is mostly about confessing, with conversions now the undercurrent, his conversions of others rather than himself. Throughout, I allow pagan Libanius and Christian Synesius to play variations on some of the chords. Neither of them had Augustine's intelligence, but, behind their rhetoric and complex style, I have found myself sympathizing with each of them too, at least over what they present as the most important items in their lives.

Augustine is the subject of a yearly torrent of scholarship across the world. I owe it a debt which readers, I hope, will bear in mind throughout. The challenge is less to say something which has nowhere been said before than to decide what to

believe and why and what to work into a new whole. I have been helped by many lifelong experts who have looked kindly on yet another Augustine book. Two visits to Villanova University and the kindness of Fr Allan Fitzgerald at its Augustinian Institute have been most helpful. So has much modern scholarship across Europe and America, in particular the incisive writings of Henry Chadwick, the detailed commentaries by the great expert J. J. O'Donnell and the French tradition, old and new. At every turn I have learned from its past masters, Aimé Solignac, Pierre Courcelle and Jean Pépin, more recently from Georges Folliet and above all Goulven Madec, whose cigarette, at least, I once lit, before receiving a terse answer to a question about Augustine's ideas about 'weight' and the soul. The exact writings of Martine Dulaey and the brilliant studies by Isabelle Bochet have continued to make me see much which I would otherwise have missed. Augustine's writings have long been scrutinized for allusions to the pagan classical authors, but although his use of Christian authors began very soon after his conversion, it has only recently been studied in similar detail. 'His learning is too often borrowed,' Gibbon slyly remarked in a note to his great *Decline and Fall*, 'his arguments, too often his own.' We are now better placed than Gibbon to test this remark against Augustine's early years, thanks especially to the work of Dulaey, Bochet and Nello Cipriani.

In Britain, the expertise of Gillian Clark, Carol Harrison, G. J. P. O'Daly, Roger Tomlin and Neil McLynn has been invaluable, accompanied by the kindness of many colleagues across the world who have sent me articles, books and helpful references, including A.-I. Bouton Touboulic, John P. Kenney, Paula Fredriksen, Christoph Marksches, Sigrid Mratschek, Michael Williams, Jason BeDuhn, Frisbee C. Sheffield and Peter Brown. I am particularly grateful to those who have read and criticized all or part of the book. My American publisher, Lara Heimert, made penetrating comments on its shape and structure. My English publisher, Stuart Proffitt, read it with the closest attention to its phrasing and intellectual blind spots. Mark Edwards commented acutely on my chapters on the Platonists and Neil McLynn on the two about Rome and Milan. It is a special pleasure to me that Samuel Lieu found time to comment on the Manichaean chapters forty years after I read his important thesis on Mani and his mission in Asia which revived my interest in that

subject. Sigrid Mratschek read the last six chapters with her exacting eye and tightened their contents with her unrivalled knowledge of the exchanges of letters between the protagonists. In Oxford, Matthieu Pignot has helped invaluablely with the notation and correction of the text and has given me encouragement on many of its topics, especially Augustine's catechumenate, on which his research is particularly important. Jonathan Yates of Villanova University then read most of the book at short notice with kind patience and expert attention, a masterclass which has improved it in many ways. None of these readers would have written as I have, but I have responded carefully to what they have corrected and adjusted. Their own views of Augustine would often be different.

My fellow classicists tend either to be cool towards Augustine or else to be unsure what his confessions and conversions really are. I have written to be intelligible, whatever the reader's prior knowledge of the subject. The effort requires more exposition than a book written for hard-pressed scholars only. I have been helped on the way by many able Oxford pupils who were encountering this subject after the insights of Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Plato and many others in the classical world which we love. Jonathan Fowles, Caroline Halliday, Michael Blaikley, Joshua Horden, Joseph Diwakar, Isabel Sunnucks and Christopher Micklem have all made me rethink some of my views, as has Ella Grunberger-Kirsh, while adding a dossier, fit for the modern social worker, on the case of Augustine, his mother, his home and the elusive Father with whom, he believed, he had briefly established contact.

A full bibliography of all that I have read for each chapter would make the book unwieldy. Instead, I have picked out a few studies on each one, emphasizing them in prefaces to the notes on each chapter so as to orient readers. Research into Augustine now means crawling on hands and knees to find essential journals in a sub-basement.

[Augustine and Kierkegaard](#) edited by Kim Paffenroth and John Doody [Augustine in Conversation: Tradition and Innovation, Lexington Books, 9781498561846]

This volume is a continuation of our series exploring Saint Augustine's influence on later thought, this time bringing the fifth century bishop into dialogue

with 19th century philosopher, theologian, social critic, and originator of Existentialism, Soren Kierkegaard. The connections, contrasts, and sometimes surprising similarities of their thought are uncovered and analyzed in topics such as exile and pilgrimage, time and restlessness, inwardness and the church, as well as suffering, evil, and humility. The implications of this analysis are profound and far-reaching for theology, ecclesiology, and ethics.

This book is a collection of fifteen clearly written and penetrating essays on the relation between Augustine and Kierkegaard. Written by both philosophers and theologians, the authors include many well-known scholars as well as some fresh and creative younger voices. Anyone interested in Kierkegaard or Augustine will learn much from this volume, which is a first-rate contribution to our understanding of both thinkers. (C. Stephen Evans, Baylor University)

Kierkegaard's reading of Augustine, like Nietzsche's reading of Kierkegaard, is one of the great 'what ifs?' of intellectual interest. Kierkegaard, it has been shown, had little direct knowledge of Church Father's major writings, leaving a wonderful tangle of potential points of contact between the two great Christian thinkers hanging in the air. This many-sided collection starts to unpick and to sort some of these connections, exploring a wide range of topics about which the African and the Dane could have had much to say to each other, including faith, time, temptation, evil, freedom, beauty, love, humility, martyrdom, and the divine image. These are themes that richly resonate with creatures such as we are—metaphysically homeless and longing, questioningly, for our one eternal home. On all these topics, Augustine and Kierkegaard still have much to say, as this collection fully shows. (George Pattison, University of Glasgow)

Over the last few decades, Kierkegaard scholarship has devoted increasing attention to those who had an influence on the Dane's authorship. Felicitously, this trend has led to a reconsideration of the ways in which Kierkegaard both draws on and departs from the thought of Augustine of Hippo. The present book not only contributes to this reconsideration but does so in creative fashion, demonstrating that the connection between Augustine and Kierkegaard can hardly be reduced to, say, a handful of debates regarding

Christian doctrine. Rather, these two great minds, particularly when placed in conversation, continue to stimulate our thinking on topics as diverse as time, beauty, and community. (Christopher B. Barnett)

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About the Editors and Contributors

In [Augustine and Kierkegaard](#) edited by Kim Paffenroth and John Doody [Lexington Books, 9781498561846] the editors of the series, *Augustine in Conversation: Tradition and Innovation*, depart from the usual format of connecting Augustine with some topic or discipline—politics, literature, the environment, and so on—and examining how he treats that subject, and how he subsequently influences other thinkers in their practice and study within that area of thought. Instead, we now propose to pair Augustine with a single, later thinker, to see connections in how they treat a variety of topics, issues, and challenges. The thinker who first came to mind for this exercise was the nineteenth-century philosopher and theologian Soren Kierkegaard. Soren Kierkegaard makes an intriguing and fruitful dialogue with Augustine for a variety of reasons. What are the advantages of bringing together Kierkegaard and Augustine?

Augustine and Kierkegaard are two of the most influential and charismatic figures in the Western Christian tradition. Both have more than their fair share of critical acclaim. They are striking thinkers in the way that they inspire both ire and devotion. In scholarly circles, there are few historical figures that have been attacked and defended with as much passion. This is due not only to the prodigious insights of their thoughts, but also to the intriguing and personal nature of their writings and lives.

Augustine's philosophical sophistication does not prevent him from being widely seen as a classical spiritual writer. Likewise, Kierkegaard's use of indirection, pseudonyms, and his refusal to take communion from a clergyman before he died, does

not prevent him from being read for spiritual edification.

Although they are separated by 1400 years, a continent, and the protestant reformation's largest divide in western Christianity, they share quite a few characteristics, some of which provide the basis for the discussions in this volume. Augustine and Kierkegaard hold together both sides of the tensions between grace and love, faith and will, speaking and silence, and time and eternity; their thoughts thrive on these internal and external tensions and contrasts. Even their contemporary scholars engage in modern and postmodern approaches to grasping their insights more fully. Though both men were epitomes of the times they lived in (late antique and modern), their thoughts still resonate with and challenge our postmodern world and lives. Finally, despite the fact that Augustine is viewed as a church theologian par excellence and Kierkegaard's critique of Christendom kept him from even taking communion on his death bed, they articulate a compelling view of Christianity as a complex and paradoxical mystery that is only grasped in the devoted worship and practice of Christianity. The consummate insider and the outspoken outsider both end up at a strangely traditional place in belief and commitment, though for both the emphasis should probably fall on "strangely," for their versions of devotion is never comfortable, comforting, or easy.

We begin our collection with a set of essays on what is most certainly the most important and frequently explored topic for both Augustine and Kierkegaard, "The Divine/Human Relationship." Curtis Thompson's essay compares the thoughts of Augustine and Kierkegaard on the relation of God and the human being, while examining their respective theological anthropologies. The focus is quite restricted. For Augustine, the investigation centers on his 412-page work, *The Spirit and the Letter*; for Kierkegaard, the analysis is directed toward his 1849 pseudonymous writing, *The Sickness unto Death*. Augustine's distinctive emphasis on totus Christus is treated before digging into his thinking by way of the six links in his "Golden Chain"—law, faith, grace, healing, freedom, and love via Spirit. Likewise, after discussing Kierkegaard's distinctive emphasis of coram Deo, the same six links are used to structure the

consideration of his reflections on these matters. The analysis points out more commonalities than differences between these two figures whose importance is still great for those desiring nuanced understanding of these matters.

Matthew Dreyer next explores the parallels between Augustine and Kierkegaard's account of the divine image and how this structures the human relation to God and offers an alternate perspective to tendencies among contemporary philosophers and theologians to read Augustine's anthropology directly or indirectly into modernist and postmodernist views of the human person. Both Augustine and Kierkegaard develop a similar Pauline-inspired reading of Genesis 1:26-27, arguing that the divine image constitutes a unique relation between God and humans within the overall context of material creation, but one that humans cannot exploit into claims that they are inherently superior to all other things. The doxological movement at the root of the divine image rejects all such attempts as sinful and ultimately idolatrous, and instead points to a dynamic in which humans uniquely re-present the infinite God within their finite natures, and so image (reflect) what they can never possess as their own.

In his essay, "Augustine, Kierkegaard, and Evil," Erik M. Hanson focuses on Soren Kierkegaard's commitment to autonomy and moral rigorism which is debilitated by the Augustinian account of the origin and persistence of evil through hereditary sin. Yet his defense of human freedom and moral responsibility requires that he also avoid Pelagianism, a task that he takes up in *The Concept of Anxiety*. He thereby presents an alternative account of the origin of evil to that of Augustinian hereditary sin, in which its source is found in a morally neutral anxiety propelled by a consciousness of ignorance and possibility in the face of a divine prohibition. Hanson argues that in doing so, Kierkegaard upends and presents an alternative to the Augustinian explanation for the origin and persistence of evil. Nevertheless, he shows that Kierkegaard retains a commitment to the Augustinian account of both the nature of evil and human freedom in *The Sickness unto Death* by offering an existential account of Augustinian *privatio boni* as despair.

Finishing this section, Simon D. Podmore takes up the function and process of seduction. Within our contemporary "cultures of seduction," the anxiety of temptation assumes an endemic yet trivialized presence. For both Augustine and Kierkegaard, however, "temptation" performs a decisive role in the de-construction of the self's relation to God, to others, and to itself. Temptation helps to open awareness of an estranged inner space of despair and self-alienation, while also giving rise to a consciousness of the longing for healing by Divine Grace. Reading through the "intersections" between Augustine's *Confessions* and Kierkegaard's development of the dialectical relationship between "temptation" (*Fristelse*) and "spiritual trial" (*Anfoegtelse*), this essay proposes a constructive theological account of the role of temptation in the narrative of "the confessing self." In doing so, it explores how the language of seduction is commensurate with the erotic longing of the restless self: how the self comes to itself through the confession of its seduction by "lower" and "higher" forms of desire before God. Through Augustine and Kierkegaard, a theology of "temptation" and "spiritual trial" arises, which offers a critical alternative to the banality of temptation evident in our contemporary cultures of seduction.

Two of our essays then treat of the paradox that is "Time." Although neither Augustine nor Kierkegaard is known chiefly for his metaphysics, Karl Aho shows how their philosophies of time share key similarities. They each emphasize the difficulty of distinguishing the present from the past and the future, and each retains an important role for each person's experience of the present. Yet they prompt their readers to respond to this experience differently: Augustine exhorts his readers to anticipate their future rest with God while Kierkegaard commends his readers to instead focus on the present.

Despite this apparent disagreement, however, Augustine and Kierkegaard ultimately affirm that that our orientation towards time should direct us towards rest in God.

Robert Reed's chapter argues that Kierkegaard's understanding of faith, based on a thoroughly innovative theory of time-consciousness and the self, is fundamentally at odds with Augustine's on the relation between faith and knowledge. While Augustinian faith anticipates an eternal life after death for a self that will finally realize true

happiness, Kierkegaardian faith is concerned solely with the next moment, the atemporal "instant" where "time and eternity touch each other," a concept apparently original with Kierkegaard. The self "becomes eternal" by accepting the anxiety of temporal existence as the natural manifestation of the void (Afgrund) characterizing each instant. Only by continually acknowledging one's nothingness in the instant can one will to be the self one in fact is—at every moment utterly dependent upon one's creator for everything. To consent to this self-nullification before God is for Kierkegaard the sole task of faith, and since he views all cognitive activity, even human self-consciousness, as essentially an attempt to posit oneself—in a word, as intentionality or sin—the intentional act of inquiring intellectually about what is absolutely Other must to some degree deny the reality of the instant and subvert one's relation to the Other. Reed shows how the divergence between Augustine and Kierkegaard on faith and knowledge is reflected in their responses to the classic paradox of inquiry, recounted in Plato's *Meno*, and in their different views on time, anxiety, and despair.

Nearly as important as how humans relate to their God, is how they relate to the material and finite world in which they find themselves, and the next three essays concern themselves with various elements of that relation. Janna Gonwa explores the conviction, shared by Augustine, Kierkegaard, and Foucault, that desires play a pivotal role in the constitution of subjectivity. Philosophers sometimes take Foucault and other poststructuralists to be drawing radically novel conclusions about subjectivity-formation and the fragmentation of the desiring subject, but in fact, Augustine expressed similar views, many of which Kierkegaard later adopted. Her essay argues that readers of Foucault may dismiss such similarities out of a belief that Augustine's and Kierkegaard's teleological Christian thought has no room for a true multiplicity of desires. Further, they may have moral objections to any attempt to organize and unify multiple desires under an overarching love for God, as both Augustine and Kierkegaard seek to do. While acknowledging that Augustine and Kierkegaard both hoped that the Christian might progress over time to more fully integrate all her desires into her Christian calling—and, therefore, to become a more unified self—the essay suggests that this trajectory need not be taken to instrumentalize the

multiple desires that carry her through the progression. Considering Augustine's autobiographical narration and Kierkegaard's "stages of life" as two models for the teleological progression of desire, it proposes a sacramental reading of the objects of desire that might allow a singleness of will to coexist with a multiplicity of loves.

Peder Jothen next examines sensual beauty, a frequently overlooked theme when linking Augustine and Kierkegaard. Seemingly, Augustine's Platonism and Kierkegaard's Protestantism exemplify such divergent views that beauty is an unhelpful interpretive lens. Yet, both see human existence as decidedly relational, with both emphasizing love as decisive in relating to beauty. Likewise, both affirm the divine goodness of worldly beauty. That said, behind these continuities lies conflicting accounts of the essential nature of sensual beauty. Augustine values it as a form of theological communication; experiencing sensual beauty sacramentally hints at beauty as an attribute of God, thereby opening one up to a virtuous existence. Kierkegaard, though, sees it as a form of existence communication; like a mirror, seeing worldly beauty allows a self to reflect and evaluate how one is relating to God and others. But as such, both thinkers share the common thread of stressing the need to rightly love sensual beauty as a key dimension to Christian existence.

Thomas J. Millay then focuses on similarities and differences in Augustine and Kierkegaard's philosophies of reading. Drawing on Brian Stock, the chapter begins by briefly articulating Augustine's philosophy of reading, focusing especially on (a) the transformation of the self that should occur when reading, and (b) the kinds of books that lend themselves to eliciting such transformation. This serves as an entry point into Kierkegaard's philosophy of reading, which is both similar to and importantly different from Augustine. Drawing in particular from *For Self-Examination*, Millay shows how Kierkegaard's philosophy of reading, like Augustine's, places its accent on the transformation of the self: if one's reading is not drawing one closer to God, one is not reading rightly. In regard to this theme, Kierkegaard is profoundly similar to Augustine. The two differ essentially, however, with respect to what genres of literature have the potential to generate such a

self-transformation. For Augustine, one should in general stick to reading Scripture (for it possesses words that point to or mediate the Word), and poetic fictional works are to be avoided. Reading Scripture was also hugely important for Kierkegaard, but in contrast to Augustine he maintains that poetical-fictional works can also be occasions for upbuilding—indeed, novels can even hold greater transformative potential than explicitly upbuilding works (especially, Kierkegaard thinks, novels written in his own age, such as Thomasine Gyllembourg's *A Story of Everyday Life*).

A particular way of relating to the world, as "Home and Homelessness," informs our next set of essays. The first in this section is a reprint of a chapter originally in [The Seventh Solitude: Metaphysical Homelessness in Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche](#) by Ralph Harper (1916-1996) [The Johns Hopkins University Press, 978-0801802560]. In this remarkable, interdisciplinary romp through disparate texts and across many centuries, Harper explores the Kierkegaardian idea of "inwardness [as a] metaphysical tension within the soul" in Dostoevsky's novels. In this examination, he uncovers interesting connections between Kierkegaard and Socrates, but mostly contrasts between Kierkegaard and Augustine, especially on the point of individualism and community (similarly noted in other essays in this volume).

In her essay, Natalia Marandiu engages the concepts of home, love, and the self as an interconnected nexus, and argues, in dialogue with Augustine and Kierkegaard, that love relationships create the self and constitute its home. The argument assumes a theological anthropology of human interconnectivity and ultimate yearning for union with God, albeit expressed in human loves. Fueled by desire, the journey toward God coincides with the formation of the self. While Augustine's distinction between *frui* and *uti* love precludes him from positing an earthly home, Kierkegaard's emphasis on the human *eros* relativizes the Augustinian limits and provides building blocks for this essay's constructive argument that human love creates subjectivity. The essay envisions home as a relational space of human love in which God the Holy Spirit dwells between partners as a "middle term."

Robert Puchniak next shows how both Augustine and Kierkegaard employed the imagery of existence as pilgrimage in their writings. Pilgrimage was a useful trope for each as he depicted the suffering, alienation, and penitential devotion that marked Christian life. Human beings, as restless creatures, wander along a path fraught with anxiety, temptation, and an unsated longing for transcendence. While Augustine understood pilgrimage more prominently in a communal sense (i.e., as the faithful gathered within a "pilgrim church"), Kierkegaard employed the imagery of pilgrimage with reference to the solitary journey of "the single individual." Augustine walked in the company of others; Kierkegaard walked alone.

Our collection ends with essays on the topic of "Human Communities and Ethics." Beginning this section, Lee C. Barrett traces how the soteriological visions of Augustine and Kierkegaard shared much in common in spite of the vast chronological and cultural differences that separated them. Both saw faith and love as inseparable responses to the beauty of God's self-giving in the Incarnation, and both therefore linked justification and sanctification in ways that defied Catholic and Protestant scholastic orthodoxies. Moreover, both incorporated individual pathos into their highly rhetorical ways of writing theology. However, this convergence did not prevent them from developing radically different ecclesiologies. This divergence is understandable in light of the different impediments to growth in love that they discerned in their respective cultural contexts. Augustine felt that in an enviroing secular culture that valorized self-aggrandizement, spiritual pilgrims needed the nurture, reinforcement, and guidance of a community that instantiated God's self-giving love. The church needed to intensively socialize wayward individuals in order to combat the powerful temptations of the secular world.

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, feared that complacency and passionlessness had infected Christendom and had undermined the pursuit of Christian virtues. Therefore, in order to make passionate faith possible, a genuine Christian community had to become an agent of destabilization and foment uncertainty and passionate risk-taking. Augustine's concerns led to a collectivistic and sacramental view of the church, while Kierkegaard's worries led him to envision the

church as an intentional fellowship of mutually challenging religious provocateurs.

In his essay, W. Glenn Kirkconnell examines the virtue of humility. In his seminal *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre argued that Kierkegaard was part of the liberal moral tradition that ultimately led to emotivism and the collapse of ethics as a rational project. This essay examines this view of Kierkegaard as the arbitrary existentialist, and uses MacIntyre's description of the Augustinian moral tradition to argue that Kierkegaard should instead be seen as a modern heir to the Augustinian legacy. In particular, Augustine treats humility as the cardinal virtue, and pride as the original and deadly sin; this essay compares Augustine's discussion of humility with the role this virtue plays in Kierkegaard's thought. Finally, this essay ends with an argument for the importance of humility as a moral and epistemological virtue today.

In our final essay, Jack Mulder Jr., discusses some of Augustine's ideas about martyrdom and persecution, and also his vision for his famous two cities, the earthly city, and the heavenly city. He then turns to Kierkegaard's work, which shows a certain impatience with post-Constantinian Christianity, and the compromises he believes take place within it. Kierkegaard thinks of martyrdom as something more like a requirement for genuine Christian faith and thinks that persecution by the established order will be more or less explicit when someone embraces a truly radical Christian faith in real life. As a way of assessing these two thinkers when it comes to martyrdom and persecution, he considers how they might respond to Pope Francis's categories of explicit and polite persecution. Ultimately, Augustine is nearer to "explicit" persecution and martyrdom and may understand it better. In regard to "polite persecution," Mulder argues that this is essentially Kierkegaard's intellectual milieu, and so the wider phenomenon may be more familiar to him. Augustine has tools to understand particular cases of polite persecution, though. Both figures have much to teach us in regard to times when Christianity meets cultural resistance.

[Leontius of Byzantium: Complete Works](#) edited and translated, with an Introduction by Brian E. Daley,

SJ [Oxford Early Christian Texts, Oxford, 9780199645237]

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Leontius of Byzantium and his Times

Modern attempts to speak of the person of Jesus within the framework of the Christian tradition usually begin with the dense, technically worded formulation produced, after several decades of heated controversy, by the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451; for most Christians, this statement provides the necessary foundation for an orthodox understanding of who and what Jesus is. There, after reviewing the earlier creedal formulas for Christian theism promulgated by the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), which

present, in summary form, the biblically based narrative of creation, Incarnation, and Christian hope, and after reviewing the more sharply focused questions about the personal identity of Christ that had arisen, mainly in the Greek-speaking world, in the years since the Council of Constantinople, the bishops at Chalcedon added their own terse, carefully balanced attempt to express clearly how the Churches, building on that classical base, must understand Jesus:

Following, then, the holy Fathers, we have all learned to confess with one voice that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son: the same one complete in his divinity and complete in his humanity, the same one truly God and truly human, with rational soul and body; of one substance with the Father in his divinity, the same one of one substance with us in his humanity, "like us in all respects apart from sin'...; recognized in two natures without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation, in such a way that the distinction of his natures is never destroyed by their union, but rather that the particular character of each nature comes together to form one persona and one hypostasis—something not divided or distinguished into two personae, but one and the same only-begotten Son, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ ...

Much has been written, and continues to be written, about the import of this statement for Christian faith and practice; about the historical context, origins, and intended signification of the terms being used; and about the complex history of the reception and theological use of the statement, especially in the three or four centuries immediately following its formulation. Carefully crafted to reflect the language and emphases of a number of different voices in the debates about the person of Christ during the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the Chalcedonian formulation was—and still is—capable of a variety of interpretations. It can be read as a cautious affirmation of the emphasis Cyril of Alexandria had increasingly articulated, on Christ's personal, subjective unity as Son of God and divine Savior, during his long debate with Nestorius and his followers in the two decades after 429; it can also be read as an attempt to express, in widely acceptable terms, the symmetry and balance Christians recognize between Christ's human and divine characteristics, as the theologians

and exegetes of the Antiochene tradition had stressed. Taken by itself, the text seems to reflect a studied ambiguity.

And as is well known, the immediate effect of Chalcedon's formula was not to be the basis for reconciliation among dissenting parties in the Churches of the Eastern Empire—despite the fact that, with the sanction of the imperial government, it immediately attained the force of law. The statement came, instead, to be the cause of even more long-lasting and bitter divisions. To many Christians in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, it was simply Nestorian Christology thinly disguised—the triumph of a way of thinking about Jesus that focused on the irreconcilable differences between his full human reality and the Mystery of God that he personally revealed; to others, intellectual heirs of the Antiochene school, it seems to have represented compromise and pious obscurantism, and pointed up the need to be still more explicit about not confusing God and the human in the person and work of Jesus. During the reigns of the emperors Zeno (474-91) and his successor Anastasius I (491-518), imperial policy was clearly leaning away from relying on the Chalcedonian formula to bring about a religious reconciliation in the East, even though no later emperor ever formally disowned what Chalcedon had produced.

In the second decade of the sixth century, the direction of official theology changed. The emperor Justin (518-27), along with his gifted, ambitious, theologically learned nephew and successor Justinian (527-65), tried to rebuild consensus through ecclesiastical diplomacy, through negotiation, and through promoting a careful, subtly expressed reinterpretation and even a rephrasing of the Chalcedonian portrait of Christ, which made the Council's language appear to be more unambiguously friendly to the vision of Cyril of Alexandria than had been obvious before. This attempt to recast Chalcedon in more unitive, Word-centered terms has been called by some modern Western scholars "neo-Chalcedonian" Christology. And while the term has not been universally accepted—especially by those who want to emphasize doctrinal continuity and consistency in the Church's classical pronouncements—the reality of an increasingly unitive, increasingly God-centered interpretation of what Chalcedon had said about the person of Christ is clearly expressed

in the writings of such sixth-century theologians as John of Caesaraea, Ephrem of Amida, and the emperor Justinian himself, as well as by such Latin writers as John Maxentius and the celebrated "Scythian monks," who campaigned together in East and West for such an understanding of Christ in the 520s. This approach to receiving and expressing Chalcedonian Christology became official Church doctrine—and imperial law—with the decrees and canons of the Second Council of Constantinople, in 553.

The late fifth to early sixth century, then—the century between Chalcedon and Constantinople II—was a time of enormous importance for the development of Christian theology and institutions, mainly centered on the continuing reception of Chalcedon's vision of Christ. Christian theology, from the mid-fifth century on, was characterized to an unusual degree by a new, "scholastic" style of thought and expression: by a rhetoric and a style of argument derived more from academic debates than from ecclesiastical preaching or polemics. Question-and-answer format, sets of theses or provocatively formulated statements, chains of syllogisms, and the use of massive dossiers of excerpts from classical Christian authorities to lend weight to an author's argument all became standard features of theological controversy. Accuracy in terminology, coherent argument, and theological consistency and precision became increasingly the central concern on all sides of Church debates, and the terms used were frequently those of the philosophical schools—especially of the Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonic commentators on Aristotle.¹ This is the cultural and historical context, clearly, in which the theological writings edited here, all focused on defining the person and the reality of Christ, all reflecting the heat and intensity of sixth-century post-Chalcedonian debate, must be located.

The six theological works associated with the name of Leontius of Byzantium provide little clue to the author's life or personality. Indeed, the manuscripts of his works give no place of origin for their author at all, but refer to him simply as a monk: "the "blessed monk Leontius," "the blessed hermit Leontius," "Leontius the ascetic,"? "Abba Leontius." And the tracts themselves do not add much to our information. Their author was once, we read, when still young, an enthusiastic member of a group of

Chalcedonian Christians, whose theological heroes were Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, but he was providentially "converted" to a more orthodox understanding of the Church's official Christology. Now, apparently after some years of strenuous theological controversy, he has been urged by pious friends to put his own position in writing," and a "just cause," as well as the duties of friendship, move him to comply. He tells us no more, however, about what that just cause might be.

Besides these direct autobiographical references, the works themselves give a few further hints to the identity, career, and date of Leontius the monk. Although he claims, with conventional modesty, to have had neither secular education nor experience as a writer, the author of these tracts was clearly a man of considerable dialectical and philosophical training, with extraordinary sharpness of mind and strong theological passions. All of his extant works are polemical in nature. The first three treatises in the collection—the *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* (CNE), the *Epilyseis* (Epil.) or *Solutiones Argumentorum Severi*, and the *Epaporēmata* (Epap.) or *Triginta Capita contra Severum*—are undoubtedly directed first of all against the anti-Chalcedonian supporters of Severus of Antioch. The fourth tract, *Contra Aphthartodocetas*, is aimed against Chalcedonians who have adopted Julian of Halicarnassus's theory of the innate incorruptibility of Christ's body. The *Deprehensio et Triumphus super Nestorianos* is a tirade against the more extreme representatives of Antiochene Christology. Even Leontius's remaining work, the florilegium of extracts from the Apollinarian writings known as the *Adversus Fraudes Apollinaristarum*, though it contains no substantial theological arguments of the author's own, has the polemical purpose of proving that many of the patristic proof-texts used by his opponents—presumably, again, the party of Severus—are really taken from the writings of Apollinarius or his followers. In addition to this fairly well-defined set of opponents, Leontius occasionally refers in a veiled but more personal way to the other enemies against whom he wields his pen: these are "the wise ones of today the "top philosophers who hold the traditions of the Fathers in contempt," and who hope, by the use of their influence at court, to "make themselves wise men by decree " Clearly politics, as well as theology, is in the air.

All of these polemical references, taken together, suggest the reign of Justinian, the emperor-theologian in whose court theological controversy seethed through all the toils of political and personal intrigue; more specifically, they suggest the 530s, when the controversy over Julian of Halicarnassus's doctrine of the incorruptibility of Christ had spread beyond Egyptian and Palestinian "monophysite" circles to the Byzantine Church, and when the emperor's policy of promoting conciliation towards Severus and his followers had led to heated public debate between Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian theologians. Further, Leontius's allusions to the Pseudo-Dionysius, and his inclusion of a passage from the *De Divinis Nominibus* in the florilegium make it unlikely that he was writing much before 532, the year of the first known reference to the Dionysian corpus within the Chalcedonian Church. There are, it is true, two apparent references to Leontius by Byzantine writers, which suggest a somewhat later date for his writings than Justinian's reign, but neither of them has a strong claim to credibility as a source. And two references in the DTN seem to confirm a date of composition the desert monasteries during the 530s and early 540s, and who exercised, for a time, strong influence at Justinian's court. Since the works of the monk Leontius were first published, in Francisco Torres's careful Latin translation, in 1603, scholars have debated whether the author is indeed the same Leontius as Cyril's Origenist from the Judaeian desert. Before we attempt to reach our own conclusion, it may be useful to summarize briefly what Cyril has to say.

Cyril first mentions Leontius of Byzantium as a member of the party of monks who accompanied St Sabas, the influential Palestinian monastic founder and leader, on a mission to Constantinople in April 531, to petition the emperor for economic aid for Christian Palestine, which had recently been devastated by Samaritan raids. In return for the emperor's help, Sabas predicts success for Justinian in his reconquest of the territory lost by his predecessors: success as part of God's plan for ridding the capital and the world of "the heresy of Arius and those of Nestorius and Origen." His mention of Arianism here is understandable enough, since much of the empire Justinian hoped to regain was then held by Arian Goths; but Sabas mentioned Nestorianism and Origenism, Cyril tells us, because he had discovered that some of the

monks in his company, who were now busily holding disputations in the capital with "monophysites" were in fact tainted with these two heresies. The two classical heresies seem to be associated in Cyril's mind, for reasons I shall explore further; and Leontius of Byzantium is the one Origenist Cyril explicitly names. About 514, a monk named Nonnus and three of his friends had been expelled from the Nea Lavra, one of the smaller communities in the Judaeian desert, for holding the "atheistic" doctrines of Origen, Evagrius Ponticus, and Didymus the Blind." Five years later, under a new hegumen, the Origenist group had been quietly readmitted; then, if not before, Leontius had been one of their number. Now Sabas discovered again, in Constantinople, the "unorthodoxy" of Leontius and his party; accordingly, he "sent them away and excluded them from his company."

[Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini](#) by Philip Burton
[Oxford University Press, 9780199676224]

The *Vita Martini* or Life of Martin of Sulpicius Severus is one of the classic Latin hagiographies. Its hero, Martin, was one of the first monks in the Western Roman Empire, and was also one of the first monk-bishops. His life, as presented by Sulpicius, is a series of confrontations: with various Emperors and other leading figures in the Roman state, with members of the "Arian heresy," Christians whose theology of the Trinity placed them at odds with exponents of "Nicene" Christianity, with the lax and venal fellow-bishops in Gaul, and above all with the Devil, whose various shows of strength and guile Martin faces down. The *Vita Martini* is a brilliant combination of Christian and classical culture, providing allusions both to the Bible and to authors such as Virgil and Sallust throughout. In addition to its intrinsic literary and historical interest, it is also an ideal first example of a "real Latin" text, with a series of vivid, anecdotal episodes. This edition provides a Latin text with facing English translation, along with a commentary addressing matters of linguistic, literary, theological, and wider cultural interest, taking into account the revolution in the study of 'late antiquity' in the last fifty years.

This edition began in notes produced for students in the Universities of St Andrews and Birmingham with whom I had the pleasure of reading the *Vita Martini*. I would like to thank those students for reminding me constantly of what matters to them. I hope our shared experience may be of use to others who set out to read this fascinating text in their turn.

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[Sulpicius Severus](#) by Richard J. Goodrich [Ancient Christian Writers, Paulist Press, 9780809106202]

Volume 70 in the Ancient Christian Writers series offers the first complete English translation since the late nineteenth century of the works of Sulpicius Severus, an early fifth-century Gallic writer. Although Sulpicius is primarily known for his two works on Saint Martin of Tours (*Life of Saint Martin* and *Dialogues*), he also wrote the *Chronica*, a history of the world in two books that began with the creation of Adam and extended to the ecclesiastical controversies of late-fourth-century Gaul. These three works, plus a small number of extant letters, offer a fascinating glimpse into the emerging Gallic church, the use of historical writing in biography, apologetic, and polemic, and the role played by Roman aristocrats in promoting and shaping the western monastic movement.

Excerpt: Sulpicius Severus' *Vita Martini* is its own best introduction. However, as some readers may not necessarily be familiar either with the late antique world or with early Christianity, what

follows is a selective guide to other reading, mostly Anglophone or in translation.

Those looking for general background in late-antique studies may derive pleasure and profit from Peter Brown's [The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750](#) (1991) and [The Making of Late Antiquity](#) (1993), from Averil Cameron's [The Later Roman Empire](#) (1993), from Stephen Mitchell's [A History of the Later Roman Empire](#) (2002), and from Gillian Clark's [Late Antiquity: A Very Short Introduction](#) (2011). There are many books on early Christianity. Among the older English works we may note William Frend's [The Early Church](#) (1965) or [Henry Chadwick's](#) work of the same name (1962). More recent ones include Mark [Humphries' Early Christianity](#) (2006), Josef Lössl's [The Early Church: History and Memory](#) (2010), and Morwenna Ludlow's [The Early Church](#) (2009). On Christianity's transition from fringe to mainstream religion, see Robert Markus, [The End of Ancient Christianity](#) (1991). On the early history of the ascetic and monastic movements, see Derwas J. Chitty, [The Desert a City](#) (1966), Peter Brown, [The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity](#) (1988), and William Harmless, [Desert Christians](#) (2004). On monks and bishops, see Philip Rousseau, [Ascetics, Authority, and the Church](#) (2010) and Claudia Rapp, [Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity](#) (2005). Two authors remain essential for the wider study of Severus and Martin: Jacques Fontaine, for his edition of the *Vita Martini* (1962-9) and of the [Dialogues of Sulpicius Severus](#) (2006), and Clare Stancliffe, for her [St Martin and his Hagiographer](#) (1983). Where these works do not supersede earlier scholarship, they serve as the best introduction to it.

A little reading will soon reveal a shift in perspective in the half-century covered by the literature listed above. The study of late antiquity has increasingly taken its place as part of the study of the ancient Mediterranean generally. At the same time, the disciplines of 'patristics' and 'church history', traditionally researched and taught in university departments of theology and in religious institutions, have grosso modo been supplemented or supplanted by the wider discipline of 'early Christian studies', largely taught in departments of classics or ancient history. A sure-footed account of this process maybe found in Elizabeth A. Clark's essay 'From Patristics to Early Christian Studies, in

the excellent Oxford [Handbook of Early Christian Studies](#) edited by Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (2008). For an example of this approach in action, see Gillian Clark, [Christianity and Roman Society](#) (2004).

Primary sources remain, of course, primary. On the Roman Empire in the mid to late fourth century, there is no substitute for the works of Ammianus Marcellinus, [The Later Roman Empire](#) (a selective translation by Walter Hamilton, with introduction and notes by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, is published by Penguin). For general background on Christianity up to the age of Constantine, it is hard to get round [Eusebius of Caesarea's Ecclesiastical History](#) (translated by G. A. Williamson in Penguin as *The History of the Church*, with an introduction by Andrew Louth)—even though Eusebius' master-narrative of Christian triumph is some way from current historical orthodoxy. [Eusebius' Life of Constantine](#) (edited and translated by Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall) is likewise a central work for our understanding of church/state relations in the fourth century, and offers a very different view of the matter from that found in Severus' writings. Also useful for comparison and contrast with the *Vita Martini* is the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius' classic biography of the ascetic holy man, conveniently available in Caroline White's (1992) Penguin volume on [Early Christian Lives](#) (which also includes Jerome's *Lives of Paul of Thebes, Hilarion, and Malchus*, along with Severus' *Vita Martini* and Gregory the Great's *Life of Benedict*).

By the late fourth century, there is a great body of Christian writing, much of it available in translation online. Martin and Severus are very peripheral figures in this, but Paulinus of Nola saw the former as a master and the latter as a friend; his [Letters](#), translated (with notes) by Peter Walsh (1962), are available in the *Ancient Christian Writers* series. No work dramatizes the intellectual and emotional conflicts of the age better than the [Confessions of Augustine of Hippo](#) (numerous translations available), a work exactly contemporary with the *Vita Martini*.

For those seeking information on general points of background, there are various encyclopedias and reference works. We have mentioned Harvey and Hunter's [Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies](#); there is also the excellent [Encyclopedia of Early Christianity](#) edited by Everett Ferguson

(second edition, 1992) and the [Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity](#) edited by di Berardino and others (2014). On the classical world, [The Oxford Classical Dictionary](#) edited by Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (fourth edition, 2012) is the standard one-volume reference work. There are various useful essays in the [Companion to Late Antiquity](#) edited by Philip Rousseau (2009), and Glen Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar's [Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World](#) (1999).

[A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity](#) by Josef Lössl and Nicholas J. Baker-Brian [Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World, Wiley-Blackwell, 9781118968109]

A comprehensive review of the development, geographic spread, and cultural influence of religion in Late Antiquity

[A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity](#) offers an authoritative and comprehensive survey of religion in Late Antiquity. This historical era spanned from the second century to the eighth century of the Common Era. With contributions from leading scholars in the field, the Companion explores the evolution and development of religion and the role various religions played in the cultural, political, and social transformations of the late antique period.

The authors examine the theories and methods used in the study of religion during this period, consider the most notable historical developments, and reveal how religions spread geographically. The authors also review the major religious traditions that emerged in Late Antiquity and include reflections on the interaction of these religions within their particular societies and cultures. This important Companion:

- Brings together in one volume the work of a notable team of international scholars
- Explores the principal geographical divisions of the late antique world
- Offers a deep examination of the predominant religions of Late Antiquity
- Examines established views in the scholarly assessment of the religions of Late Antiquity

- Includes information on the current trends in late-antique scholarship on religion

Written for scholars and students of religion, [A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity](#) offers a comprehensive survey of religion and the influence religion played in the culture, politics, and social change during the late antique period.

Review pending

Sulpicius Severus

The fullest picture we have of the life of Sulpicius Severus comes from his correspondence with Paulinus, the famous bishop of Nola (Epistles 1, 5, 11, 12, 22-4, 22-32).¹ The most obvious biographical information is found in Paulinus' Epistle 5.4ff. Here we learn that Severus embarked on an ascetic life at a rather younger age than Paulinus himself had done (Epistle 5.4-5, *mihi aetas provecior ... tu ... aetate florentior*). Paulinus had been in his late thirties, perhaps forty, when he did this. Given that Severus is already an ascetic by the time of Paulinus' first extant letter to him, in 395, a birth-date of around 360 has generally been felt to fit the available facts. From the same letter we learn that Severus was born into a wealthy family (*substantia facultatum non egentior*, says Paulinus), though apparently not, like Paulinus, of senatorial rank. We learn that Severus had behind him a successful career as a lawyer, 'enjoying fame in the courts and holding the palm for eloquence' (*fori celebritate diversans et facundi nominis palmam tenens*). We hear also that he gained further wealth from his marriage into a consular family (*divitiae de matrimonio familiae consularis aggestae*). We know little about this marriage except for the fact that it ended, and that Severus, though still in the prime of life, avoided the 'licence to sin' that his single condition afforded (*post coniugium peccandi licentia et caelebs iuventas*).

We do not know how Severus became acquainted with Paulinus. As we will see, Severus seems, like Paulinus, to have been from south-west Gaul; they may have met at Bordeaux, where Paulinus at least was educated. Paulinus' Epistle 1, written shortly after his ordination at Christmas 394, presumes a close friendship between the two, though there are no reminiscences of a shared youth. At some point around this time Severus became acquainted with Martin, the ascetic and controversial bishop of

Tours, and went to visit him. Around this time too he withdrew from his legal career and began to sell off his family estates. The account he gives in the *Vita Martini* 25 strongly suggests that this was the result of Martin's urgings and Paulinus' example. We can date the beginning of this process to 394, as Paulinus refers to it in his Epistle 1.1, written in spring 395.³ His mother-in-law Bassula supported him in this, though his father did not (Paulinus, Epistle 5.6)⁴ He seems quickly to have established a religious community of his own, the 'holy sons' that Paulinus mentions in his Epistle 11.4, of 392.

From the same letter we learn that Severus has been working on a Life of Martin, which Paulinus praises, while showing something like jealousy at Severus' frequent visits to Martin and his comparative neglect of himself (Epistle 11.11-13).⁵ This, along with the infrequency of Severus' letters, leads to a breach of sorts between the two men in late 398, or perhaps 399 (Epistle 12).

By the time of Paulinus' Epistle 23, in 400, the breach has been newly mended, and it is from this period onward that we learn most from Paulinus about Severus' life as head of his own community. This was established on a little plot of land (*praediolum*: Paulinus, Epistle 24.1), the freehold of which he had assigned to the Church. In Paulinus' Epistles 31.1 and 32.2, dateable to 402-4, this is named as *Primulacium*. Two questions arise. First, had this always been the site of Severus' community? Second, where was it?

On the first of these questions, we must remain agnostic. Certainly if some eight years had elapsed between Severus' renunciation of the world and our earliest reference to *Primulacium*, his community could have moved in this time. However, Paulinus' references to the *praediolum* in Epistle 24 clearly suggest that this was Severus' permanent base by 400. As Paulinus in this letter addresses Severus' scruples over the extended process of divesting himself of his properties, one might infer that he kept other properties up to this date. This is certainly possible; but there is no stronger evidence that his community was permanently based elsewhere. At all events, the *Primulacium* community—a group of highly-educated men, who had renounced secular careers in order to live together and practise a combination of Christian asceticism and classical cultured *otium*—belongs to a type we find elsewhere in the late fourth and

early fifth centuries in the Latin West. The short-lived community that formed in the autumn of 386 around Augustine at Cassiciacum (Confessions 9.3.5), probably near Milan, is a slightly earlier example; the 'Theodolits' established around 414 by C. Postumus Dardanus, former prefects Galliarum, near modern Sisteron in Maritime Alps is a slightly later one.

The question of Primulacium's precise location is somewhat more vexed.' Some have been tempted to identify it with modern sites on the basis of toponymy; thus for example Babut (1912: 39) places it simply at Prémifiac in the Périgord, and is followed in this by e.g. Walsh (1962: 1.211). Fontaine (1962: 32ff) cautions against such identifications, and attempts to locate it on the basis of geographical references within Paulinus' and Severus' writings to Naurouze, some 46 kilometres south-east of Toulouse.' Building on Fontaine, Stancliffe (1983: 30) places it to the west of Toulouse (though outside the diocese), near the road to Bordeaux. Wherever the precise location, it was there that the *Vita Martini* was probably written.

Severus' estate there fills the dual role of a place of cultured retirement for him and his friends, and a bustling hospice for 'pilgrims and the poor' (peregrinis et egentibus, Epistle 24.3). Meanwhile, Paulinus does his best to spread his friend's reputation in the Latin Christian world. He sends Severus a tunic which belonged to his relative Melania the Elder, the famous ascetic and herself the subject of a *Life* a few years later; he also reads Severus' *Vita Martini* to her, in person-'she is very keen on stories of that sort' (Epistle 29.14, with Trout 1999: 32ff). From Paulinus (Epistle 31.1) we learn also that at Primulacium Severus had established two basilicas, the later 'on bigger lines than the previous one' (maiores priores). Paulinus and his wife Therasia send Severus and Bassula a fragment of the True Cross, to go with his existing collection of sacred ashes; Paulinus notes that the Cross 'remains as it were intact, though people take fragments from it every day' (quasi intacta permaneat cottidie dividua summentibus; Epistle 31.6). Between the two basilicas is a baptistery, with pictures of Martin and Paulinus over the font (Epistle 32.2-3). At the altar is buried Clarus, whom Severus had named in the *Vita* 23 as one of Martin's most distinguished disciples. Given that

south-western Gaul was remarkably rich in Martin's life not recorded in the *Vita*. The focus of the work, therefore, is not on Severus' own life, and few details emerge of it. There are dark allusions to a bishop who had previously acted as his protector, but who had withdrawn his friendship and protection (Dialogue 1.2). We hear more reflection on the inadequacies of bishops generally (a theme familiar to readers of the *Vita*), and on the undesirability of involving the secular arm in church politics (Dialogue 1.2). We have a mixed, but mostly positive, assessment of Jerome and his work. Implicitly at least, Severus uses the *Dialogues* to give an impression of his life at Primulacium as he would like others to picture it; a community cultured and purposeful, where monks and priests rubbed shoulders with (but outranked) high officials of the Roman state (see especially Dialogue 3.1).

Severus' other main work is his *Chronica*, a synthesis of biblical and secular history down to the consulship of Stilicho in 400." This work is not generally seen as a major source for events before Severus' own day, but is notable for his description of the process by which the ascetic Spanish bishop Priscillian was tried and put to death, despite the protests of Martin of Tours and Ambrose of Milan, under the Emperor Magnus Maximus—the first recorded legal murder of a Christian for heresy. Without exculpating Priscillian and his followers, Severus is typically scathing about the role of Spanish and Gallic bishops in bringing him before the secular courts, and of the Roman state's intervention in matters of church discipline. But while his personal views emerge clearly, there is no more information on his life, beyond the dating of the work; for the legend of Helena's discovery of the True Cross (*Chronica* 2.46-51) Severus is dependent on the account given to him by Paulinus (Epistle 31), giving a *terminus post quem* of 403-4.

Also transmitted under Severus' name are a number of letters. Along with the prefatory Epistle to Desiderius which introduces the *Vita Martini*, three others deal with Martinian matters and are generally taken to be authentic. Epistula 1, addressed to a Eusebius, recounts an incident when Martin's straw pallet caught fire under him, and how he put the flames out by prayer. In Epistle 2, addressed to a deacon by the name of Aurelius, the writer describes how he saw Martin ascending to heaven in a dream-vision, followed by his pupil

Clarus. On waking up he learns that Martin has just died. Martin is holding a copy of Severus' *Vita*, suggesting it is effectively complete by the time of his death. Epistle 3 is addressed to his mother-in-law Bassula, whom we know from Paulinus' letters to have been very close to him; in it Severus, writing from Toulouse, teases his mother-in-law for having rifled through and published his private letters, including the one to Aurelius; he then tells the story of how Martin died while on a peace-making visit to the town of Candes. Epistle 2 is presumably written shortly after Martin's death, so in late 392 or early 398, and Epistle 3 not long after Epistle 2. Epistle 1 presupposes that the *Vita* is now widely circulated, but is presumably written before the *Dialogues*, giving a date of roughly 398-404. Of the seven other letters ascribed to Severus, two are addressed to a sister, Claudia, and deal with the Last Judgement and with virginity. One is addressed to a 'bishop Paulinus' (Paulus in Halm's edition) and one to an unknown Salvius; the rest have no addressee. The authenticity of these seven letters is doubtful.

We have already mentioned the notice given by Gennadius (*De Viris Illustribus* 19), writing in the late fifth century. This may now be quoted in full:

Severus presbyter, cognomento Sulpicius, Aquitanicae provinciae, vir genere et litteris nobilis et paupertatis atque humilitatis amore conspicuus, carus etiam sanctorum virorum, Martini, Turonensis episcopi, et Paulini Nolani, scripsit non contemnenda opuscula. Nam epistulas ad amorem dei et contemptum mundi hortatorias scripsit sorori suae multas, quae et notae sunt. Scripsit ad supra dictum Paulinum Nolanum duas et ad alios alias, sed quia in aliquibus etiam familiaris necessitas inserta est, non digeruntur. Composuit et *Chronicam*. Scripsit et ad multorum profectum vitam beati Martini, monachi et episcopi, signis et prodigiis ac virtutibus illustris viri, et collationem Postumiani et Galli se mediante et iudice de conversatione monachorum Orientalium et ipsius Martini habitam in dialogi speciem duabus incisionibus comprehendit. In quarum priore refert suo tempore apud Alexandriam synodo episcoporum decretum, Origenem et cautius a sapientibus pro bonis legendum et a minus capacibus pro malis repudiandum. Hic in senecta sua a Pelagianis deceptus et

agnoscens loquacitatis culpam silentium usque ad mortem tenuit, ut peccatum quod loquendo contraxerat, tacendo penitus emendaret.

'Severus the priest, surnamed Sulpicius, of the province of Aquitaine, a man noble in his birth and in his writings, and distinguished by his love of poverty and humility, well loved also of those holy men Martin, bishop of Tours, and Paulinus of Nola; he wrote some short works which are not to be despised. For he wrote many letters to his sister, urging her to the love of God and the contempt of the world; these are well known. He wrote two to the aforementioned Paulinus of Nola, and others to other people; but, since matters of close personal interest are contained, these have not been published. He composed also a *Chronicle*. He wrote also, for the edification of the many, a *Life of the Blessed Martin, Monk and Bishop*, a man renowned for his signs and portents and mighty works, and a *Conference of Postumianus and Gallus*, with himself intervening and acting as adjudicator of the lifestyle of the oriental monks and of Martin himself; this is in the form of a dialogue, with two divisions. In the first of these he recounts what in his own time was resolved by the Synod of Alexandria, namely that Origen should both be read carefully by the wise, for his good points, and that he should be rejected by the less able, for his bad ones. In his old age he was misled by the Pelagians; and, acknowledging the guilt of his loquacity, kept silence till his death, so that he might by complete silence make good the sin he committed by speaking.

Gennadius' is the only self-contained account we have from antiquity of Severus' life. Unfortunately, many details in it are questionable. So far as the letters are concerned, the extant ones addressed to Claudia may be two of the 'many' that Gennadius knows of addressed to her. Likewise the one to Paulinus may or may not be one of the two Gennadius knew; Paulinus' own letter collection assumes that Severus wrote him at least eleven. The three generally unchallenged letters, to Eusebius, Aurelius, and Bassula, do not correspond closely to anything mentioned by Gennadius. As for the other information given by Gennadius, we may note in particular that detail that Severus was a presbyter, or priest. It is, however, notable that Severus

himself nowhere indicates that he is one. Our best source of information on this point is Paulinus, Epistle 24. In this letter he reassures Severus over his scruples at having retained the usufruct on his family estate at Primulacium when he renounced the world. This suggests that Severus was a layman, and (unlike Paulinus) could not expect a livelihood from the Church. Moreover, the fact that Paulinus represents Severus as the moral equal of a cleric (24.3) strongly suggests that he is not one in fact.

Gennadius adds further that Severus in his later life became a follower of Pelagius, the Irish monk who taught that humans could by their own strength of will choose not to sin. The chronology is plausible, as Pelagius' ideas came to prominence in the first decade of the fifth century, and remained in debate after his condemnation by the Synod of Carthage in 411. Severus' writings do not, however, suggest a Pelagian in the making; indeed, Martin's 'recognizing the goodness of God in his own work' (*bonitatem dei in suo opere cognoscens*, *Vita Martini* 1.4) suggest rather the contrary. Whatever the truth of Gennadius' statement about Severus' Pelagian sympathies, he clearly knew of a tradition that Severus lived for some time after his burst of literary activity in 396-405, without publishing further works. It is presumably on this basis as much as anything that standard accounts give his death as around 420, though earlier (or later) dates are not precluded.

This is the extent of the biographical information that we have on Severus. In addition to this, we have various indications, the earliest from within his own lifetime, of the impact of his work. The first occurs at the beginning of Paulinus the Deacon's *Life of Ambrose*, composed in around 399, where the author recalls Augustine's suggestion that he should write a life of the late bishop of Milan, 'just as the blessed bishop Athanasius and the priest Jerome penned *Lives of the hermits Antony and Paul*, and as Severus the slave of God also composed, in highly-polished style, a *Life of Martin, the venerable bishop of Tours*' (*sicut etiam Martini venerabilis episcopi Turonensis ecclesiae Severus servus dei luculento sermone contexit*). A dozen or so years later, Jerome himself, in his *Commentarius in Hiezechielem* (11.36, composed around 410-14), attempts to play down expectation of an imminent Second Coming and the descent of a New Jerusalem from heaven, as described in various

authors, including 'our friend Severus in his recent dialogue called the Gallus' (*nuper Severus noster in dialogo cui Gallo nomen imposuit*). The passage in question seems to be *Dialogues* 2.14, in which Gallus summarizes Martin's views on the coming of the Antichrist; he had, Martin believed, already been born and was waiting to come to legal age to assume his empire. This passage is in fact omitted in various manuscripts of the *Dialogues*, which presumably represents an attempt by right-thinking readers to remove the portions Jerome had found exceptionable. This is presumably also why the list of Scriptural books in the so-called *Decretum Gelasianum* (usually dated to the early sixth century, though containing earlier material) puts the 'works of Postumianus and Gallus' (*opuscula Postumiani et Galli*, presumably Severus' *Dialogues*) in the rather baggy category of 'apocryphal' books.

By the middle of the fifth century, some at least in the Greek world know of his work; the church historian Sozomen, writing shortly before 450, probably in Constantinople, includes in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a brief account of Martin and of Hilary which is clearly based on the *Vita Martini*. Slightly later, Paulinus of Périgueux is commissioned by Perpetuus, bishop of Tours from 461 to 491, to compose his metrical version of Severus' Martinian works. Perpetuus himself, in his *Testament*, asks to be buried by the feet of Martin, and provides for a supply of oil for the use of Martin's tomb. It is entirely likely that Perpetuus inherited a local tradition of veneration for Martin; for the details of Martin's life, however, it seems that Severus' *Vita* was the source par excellence. This trend continues in the sixth century, with a further verse paraphrase commissioned by the Frankish queen Radegund (died 582) of Venantius Fortunatus. Likewise Gregory of Tours (c.538-94), while aware of numerous local traditions surrounding Martin's posthumous miracles, seems essentially dependent on Severus for his biographical data.

It will be clear from this outline of Severus' career that we have no information on many details. We would like to know exactly when he was born, and when he died; we have only approximate indications of either. We would like to know whether he was brought up as a Christian; all circumstances suggest he was, at least nominally, but nothing confirms it. We would like to know

where he was educated; his friendship with Paulinus might indicate Bordeaux, as might his Aquitanian origins, but this too is conjecture. We would like to know more about his secular career, his marriage, his renunciation of the world. We would like to know more exactly where Primulacium was, and about his later life. What details we have of him, however, are at least clear and consistent in outline. The same cannot be said of his hero Martin.

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[Beatific Enjoyment in Medieval Scholastic Debates: The Complex Legacy of Saint Augustine and Peter Lombard](#) by Severin Valentinov Kitanov [Lexington Books, 9781498556484]

Beatific Enjoyment in Medieval Scholastic Debates examines the religious concept of enjoyment as discussed by scholastic theologians in the Latin Middle Ages. Severin Valentinov Kitanov argues that central to the concept of beatific enjoyment (*fruitio beatifica*) is the distinction between the terms enjoyment and use (*frui et uti*) found in Saint Augustine's treatise *On Christian Learning*. Then Peter Lombard, a twelfth-century Italian theologian, chose the enjoyment of God to serve as an opening topic of his *Sentences* and thereby set in motion an enduring scholastic discourse. Kitanov examines the nature of volition and the relationship between volition and cognition. He also explores theological debates on the definition of enjoyment: whether there are different kinds and degrees of enjoyment, whether natural reason unassisted by divine revelation can demonstrate that beatific

enjoyment is possible, whether beatific enjoyment is the same as pleasure, whether it has an intrinsic cognitive character, and whether the enjoyment of God in heaven is a free or un-free act.

Even though the concept of beatific enjoyment is essentially religious and theological, medieval scholastic authors discussed this concept by means of Aristotle's logical and scientific apparatus and through the lens of metaphysics, physics, psychology, and virtue ethics. Bringing together Christian theological and Aristotelian scientific and philosophical approaches to enjoyment, Kitanov exposes the intricacy of the discourse and makes it intelligible for both students and scholars.

Kitanov's book is a detailed, well-composed treatment; indeed, one could liken it to an encyclopedia. He presents many positions and discusses them thoroughly according to the sources. . . .He also gives summaries after almost each section, which makes it easy for the reader to grasp the essence of the sections. . . .Kitanov's book is a good compilation of the different interpretations of Augustine's (and Lombard's) view of man's final happiness in its Christian form. Any scholar interested in the history of beatific enjoyment in the Latin West during the Middle Ages would be well advised to consult Kitanov's book. (Review of *Metaphysics*)

The author's astute philosophical and logical treatment of its subject prevents a straight-through reading of *Beatific Enjoyment* from becoming a paralyzing ordeal, rendering instead merely a difficult and careful journey that is well worthwhile. . . .The author's treatment of his subject is an unusual achievement of both historical research and discerning insight into a subject that requires both. *Beatific Enjoyment in Medieval Scholastic Debates* is highly recommended by this reviewer to anyone willing to persevere in Kitanov's labyrinthine treatment of this very specialized intellectual journey. (*The Sixteenth Century Journal*)

Beatific Enjoyment in Medieval Scholastic Debates provides a thorough and reliable analysis of the discussion of medieval beatific enjoyment, enriching our awareness of the epistemic, moral, and psychological resources of this fascinating subject. (Risto Saarinen, University of Helsinki)

Severin Kitanov's thorough analysis reveals the tremendous complexity and diversity of medieval

views not just on beatitude but also on freedom, the passions, and cognition. *Beatific Enjoyment in Medieval Scholastic Debates* is invaluable for philosophers and medievalists alike, on topics from natural theology to moral psychology and beyond. (Eileen Sweeney, Boston College)

The book not only brings together the scholarship on the topic to date but maps out whole new areas for research and investigation. (Michael Dunne, National University of Ireland, Maynooth)

The Concept of Beatific Enjoyment

It has been said that part of what makes a book great is that book's enduring influence, and that what explains a book's influence is the ability of the stories or ideas contained in it to provoke interest over and over again through the generations and to still be found relevant by readers centuries after the stories were told and the ideas explored. As far as philosophical stories and ideas are concerned, one will hardly find a story of more enduring influence than Plato's Parable of the Cave and an idea of more potent and awe-inspiring character than the idea behind the Parable of the Cave, namely, that the knowledge of ultimate reality is blissful and liberating. A story parallel in depth and importance is part of the historical narrative and self-definition of Christian theology. It is the story of salvation through the resurrected Christ, the Son of God and second person of the Holy Trinity. The idea behind this story is not much different from the lesson of Plato's Cave Parable. In essence, the idea is that the knowledge of what is ultimately real is blissful and liberating. The significant difference, of course, is that the ultimate reality in Christian theology is the reality of the triune God, not the impersonal and abstract reality of Plato's forms, and that we come to know and become one with ultimate reality through Christ alone, not by being tutored by a Philosopher King. According to Christian theology, the best prospect to hope for and anticipate in this life is the experience of the face-to-face vision of the triune God in the next life. Christian theology teaches us that this vision will be accompanied with unprecedented and wholly consuming joy.

The concept of beatific enjoyment is a theological, not a philosophical concept; it is the concept of religious, not secular enjoyment. Based on New Testament allusions to the indescribable experience

of heavenly bliss in the presence of God, the concept of beatific enjoyment became a staple of Christian systematic theology thanks to Church Father and Saint Aurelius Augustine. St Augustine developed the concept both as a way of giving a teleological orientation to Christian learning and as a way of distinguishing the Christian ideal of heavenly beatitude from rival philosophical—Neo-Platonic and Stoic—conceptions of human flourishing. St Augustine's concept and treatment of enjoyment were passed on to medieval scholastic theologians as a result of the systematizing effort of Peter Lombard. Once incorporated into scholastic theological discussions in the medieval university, the concept was articulated dialectically and with scholastic discussion of enjoyment focuses on a relatively minor issue — the conceptual possibility of differentiating a "neutral" or "middle" act of the will; an act that is neither enjoyment nor use, that is directed at something other than God and that can be viewed as a weaker or lesser type of enjoyment. In Georgedes's eyes, the idea of the "neutral" or "middle" act of the will foreshadows humanist developments in ethics and paves the way for articulating a purely philosophical and secular concept of enjoyment. According to Georgedes, the "neutral" or "middle" act of the will is "[a] crack in the Augustinian edifice, hence the title of Georgedes's doctoral dissertation—*The Serpent in the Tree of Knowledge: Enjoyment and Use in Fourteenth-Century Theology*. Georgedes gives the impression that medieval theologians—such as John Duns Scotus, Peter Auriol and, above all, William of Ockham — were deeply interested in weaker or lesser types of enjoyment. Considered in the whole context of the actual treatments, some of which encompass dozens of questions, the problem of weaker enjoyments appears to be of only marginal concern. In fact, the treatments show much more interest in whether the enjoyment of God in heaven is a matter of intellectual contemplation or volitional quiescence, whether enjoyment is cognition or volition, whether enjoyment is the same or not the same as pleasure, whether differentiated enjoyments with respect to the Trinity are possible, and whether the enjoyment of God in heaven is a free act or not.

Similar in its ambition to comprehend the historical transformation from medieval Christian to early modern secular ethics is Rosenfeld's exploration of the development of the concept of enjoyment and

love in late medieval poetry. The extraordinary value of Rosenfeld's contribution is in showing that the clash between the Aristotelian ideal of happiness in this life and the Christian ideal of beatitude in the next did not characterize only the high culture of medieval university intellectuals and ecclesiastical personae. A profound sense of this clash is also present in medieval vernacular love poetry. Furthermore, Rosenfeld shows convincingly how, under the combined impact of Aristotelian moral philosophy and Christian theology, the medieval poetic imagination contributed to the emergence of what Rosenfeld calls "an earthly ethics of the love between subjects at the mercy of fortune," an ethics very much akin to that of Jacques Lacan.

In my book, I explore the various dimensions of beatific enjoyment as a theological concept. I argue that the medieval scholastic debate about the nature and possibility of beatific enjoyment gave rise to a very rich and complex understanding of the state of the human being in heaven. I also claim that by relying on the tools of Aristotelian ethics, logic and metaphysics and by engaging the contents of Christian doctrine dialectically, medieval scholastics achieved a deeper understanding of the intellectual foundations of the Christian worldview, on the one hand, and the limitations of philosophical reason, on the other. Scholastic theologians asked many different questions about the nature of ultimate states of consciousness and answered these questions differently depending on how they understood theology as a scientific discipline, the method of theological analysis and argumentation, the structure and functioning of human cognition, volition and motivation. The questions medieval theologians asked would still be asked today, if we shared their faith and if we were intellectually curious about that faith and courageous enough to ask difficult questions about it.

In what follows, I discuss the concept of beatific enjoyment in light of its origin in the theological works of St Augustine and in the setting of the tradition of commenting on Peter Lombard's Sentences. More precisely, I discuss beatific enjoyment as an act of the will, the relationship between enjoyment, pleasure and cognition, the possibility of differentiated enjoyments with respect

to the Trinity, and the contingency and necessity of enjoyment in heaven. My book consists of five chapters. The first chapter deals with St Augustine's view of enjoyment. My objective is to show what things ought to be enjoyed and used, and to explain what enjoyment is and how it relates to St Augustine's view of the human passions and will. I also survey Peter Lombard's adaptation and interpretation of St Augustine's distinction between enjoyment and use. In the second chapter, I examine different thirteenth-century views about the objects and psychology of enjoyment. I also inspect enjoyment in connection with volitional quiescence, and I address the problem of animal enjoyment. My analysis focuses on the views of Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, St Bonaventure and St Thomas Aquinas among others. In the third chapter, I look at early fourteenth-century conceptions about the objects and psychology of enjoyment. The central themes in this chapter cover the division of the acts of the will, the problem of the relationship between enjoyment and cognition, on the one hand, and between enjoyment and pleasure, on the other. The key figures in this chapter are major early fourteenth-century theologians such as John Duns Scotus, Peter Auriol, Francis of Marchia, Walter Chatton, William of Ockham, Robert Holcot and Adam Wodeham among others. I also provide an account of the controversial view of Durandus of Saint Pourçain regarding the adequate object of beatific enjoyment, and I discuss Durandus's view in terms of its critical reception at the time. In chapter four, I review the early fourteenth-century discussion of the enjoyment of the Trinity. The main question in chapter four is whether there can be differentiated enjoyments with respect to the divine essence and persons. In chapter five, I give an overview of early fourteenth-century positions regarding the contingency of beatific enjoyment. Here, as in the preceding two chapters, I pay close attention to the positions of Scotus, Auriol, Ockham, Chatton, Holcot, and Wodeham among others. I conclude with a brief overview of the state of the debate about beatific enjoyment in the late Middle Ages and the early modern era and I summarize my findings.

Beatific Enjoyment in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond: Conclusion and Summary

Interest in the concept of beatific enjoyment persisted throughout the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, although the treatments of the concept become more and more perfunctory and repetitive the closer we get to the sixteenth century, Martin Luther's Reformation movement and the dawn of the modern era. The tendency of late medieval discussions of enjoyment to become more and more routine can be briefly illustrated on the basis of the work of Erfurt University theologians. As is well-known, Erfurt University was Martin Luther's alma mater. Luther (1483-1546) earned the Master of Arts degree at Erfurt University (1505) and, consequently, entered the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt to study theology. At the monastery, Luther served as a sententiary bachelor (1509-1511) and wrote his own marginal notes on Lombard's Sentences. By Luther's time, the theological training at Erfurt had a very firm reputation based on a long tradition stretching back to religious houses of study founded almost a century prior to the official inauguration of Erfurt University in 1392.

One of the earliest treatments of enjoyment from an Erfurt theologian is found in the Sentences commentary of the Augustinian Angelus Dobelinus. Dobelinus (or the "Angel of Döbeln") was Erfurt University's first theology professor and dean. Since he received his theological training at Prague, where he studied under John Klenkok, and at Paris, where he earned his theology doctorate, Dobelinus can be seen as the founding father of Erfurt theology, especially the theology of Erfurt Augustinians. Dobelinus's Sentences commentary (*Lectura in Sententias*) is preserved in a single manuscript owned by the Jena University Library and dates probably from the period when Dobelinus lectured on the Sentences at Paris (1373-75). The commentary covers all four books of Lombard's Sentences and the treatment of enjoyment it contains is among the most extensive treatments in the commentary. Dobelinus's treatment of enjoyment abounds in references to the views of early fourteenth-century theological authorities, such as Duns Scotus, Gregory of Rimini, Adam Wodeham, Richard Kilvington (ca. 1302-61), Robert Holcot, Roger Roseth and Richard FitzRalph. We also find mention of more contemporary

authors such as John Klenkok, Richard Brinkley (ca. 1325-73)⁵ and Hugolin of Orvieto (†1375) as well as the fairly unknown figures Bonsemblant (1327-69) and Facinus of Asti (theology bachelor at Paris during 1361-63 and theology doctor before 1373). Dobelinus's treatment of enjoyment contains two principal questions—the first focusing on whether the enjoyment of the highest good is solely an operation and pleasure of the created will and the second examining whether something other than the highest good can satisfy the will. A closer look at Dobelinus's discussion of enjoyment reveals Dobelinus's profound familiarity with the various issues examined by early fourteenth-century Sentences commentators in the context of the first distinction of book I. Dobelinus discusses problems such as whether enjoyment is an incomplex or complex volition, whether there is a third thing or middle act (*res media, actus medius*) between enjoyment and use, whether enjoyment itself requires cognition as a partial efficient cause or whether it actually is a certain kind of cognition, etc. How original is Dobelinus in general? Perhaps Dobelinus is not very original, according to Damasus Trapp's verdict, even though he is often critical with respect to his most cherished authorities, according to Zumkeller. The fact remains, however, that Dobelinus's treatment of enjoyment, in particular, is astoundingly rich and complex. One cannot read this treatment without at the same time acknowledging the highest degree of rigor and sophistication that the debate about the nature and possibility of beatific enjoyment had achieved by the middle of the fourteenth century. On the other hand, one is hard pressed to find novel positions and problems. What we see, instead, is the rehearsal of already familiar views and arguments to the point of saturation.

Decades after Dobelinus, as we move closer to the turn of the fourteenth century and enter the fifteenth century, we tend to discover trimmed down treatments of enjoyment. Most of the surviving Sentences commentaries from Erfurt theologians stem from the Franciscan tradition. A representative example of the state of the debate about beatific enjoyment from early fifteenth-century Erfurt is found in the Sentences commentary of Matthias Döring (ca. 1393-1469), also known as Doctor Armatus (i.e. "The Armed Doctor"). Döring was a talented preacher and was regarded as a highly competent interpreter and defender of

Catholic doctrine. Prior to receiving theological training at Erfurt, Döring had actually studied in England for five years. Döring's *Sentences* commentary has survived in a single manuscript owned by the Munich State Library. Ludger Meier has discovered that Duns Scotus is the most often cited theological authority in Döring's *Sentences* commentary. Besides being a faithful follower of the Subtle Doctor, Döring is likewise a reliable interpreter of Scotus's views.⁷² One can therefore see significant value in Döring's work insofar as reading Döring can help one understand Scotus better. Döring's treatment of enjoyment is in fact a perfect illustration of Döring's hermeneutic abilities.

Döring's treatment of enjoyment is to a substantial degree representative of the tendency of late Erfurt *Sentences* commentators to remain closer to the letter of Lombard's text, but the treatment also contains an examination of the problem of differentiated enjoyments. The problem is not itself formulated as a question to be discussed. Rather, the problem emerges as a counter-argument to the part of Döring's conclusion which states that only the immutable Trinity is the genuine object of ordinate enjoyment. One immediately realizes that the counter-argument is in the text for the sake of exercise. According to this counter-argument, the Trinity functions as an adequate object of enjoyment either under a single aspect (*sub unica ratione*) or under several aspects (*sub pluribus rationibus*). But the Trinity cannot be subsumed under a single aspect because the aspect proper to the Father differs from that proper to the Son. Neither can the Trinity be subsumed under several aspects because then one could—without contradiction—enjoy God under one aspect but not enjoy God under a separate aspect, which is impossible. Döring responds to this argument by means of a "Scotist solution" (*ratio Scotica*). This solution is then itself subjected to dialectical examination in terms of objections raised by John of Ripa (fl. 1357-1368). In his assessment of Ripa's objections, Döring points out that "[m]any who have attempted to ensnare this [Scotus's] position have only managed to trap their own feet."¹⁵ Clearly, Döring did not think much of Ripa's criticism of Scotus. What is especially rewarding about Döring's text is the effort itself to clarify what Scotus had meant and whether or not Scotus had been understood correctly by critics such as John of Ripa. Döring explains that Scotus's position, as

criticized by Ripa, amounts to the following: "the act of the enjoyable vision has the divine essence as a primary object, but the divine persons as a secondary object; however, God can by means of a special outpouring assist man with respect to the evidence of the primary object and not of the secondary [one]"¹⁶ What we see happening in late medieval discussions of beatific enjoyment—and Döring's discussion is in my view a textbook example—is an attempt to come to full terms with what has already been done by past masters by revisiting, elucidating and consolidating their positions and arguments.

Interest in the concept of beatific enjoyment in the sixteenth century gradually disappears, and this happens in great part as a result of lack of interest in commenting on Lombard's *Sentences*. One of the last extensive and rich treatments of the concept of beatific enjoyment is found in the *Sentences* commentaries of the renowned Scottish theologian and philosopher John Mair (1467-1550). Mair studied and taught theology and logic at Paris, where he met influential historical figures such as Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536), Jean Calvin (1509-1564) and St Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556). Mair's commentaries are not only an encyclopedia of medieval scholastic systematic theology, but an important witness in connection with the influence of humanism on scholastic authors. One can still find surprises in Mair's lengthy and tedious treatments of the already sorely familiar questions and problems pertaining to the object and psychology of enjoyment, the differentiated enjoyments of the Trinity, the contingency and impeccability of the saints in heaven. Yet, it is difficult to dispel the feeling that the passion that once propelled the debate forward has long been gone as the snows of yesteryear.

At the dawn of the modern era, one can hardly find a more pronounced rejection of the entire scholastic exploration of transcendent states of consciousness than in Thomas Hobbes's masterpiece of political philosophy, *Leviathan* (1651) In his discussion of the human passions in *Leviathan*, Book I, Ch. 6, Hobbes defines felicity as the uninterrupted success in the satisfaction of desire. The satisfaction of one desire leads inevitably to another. The series of desire is endless, at least in this life, for, as Hobbes states, "there is no such thing as perpetual Tranquility of mind, while we life

here." What about supernatural felicity? If such is possible for those of us who honor God, then we "shall no sooner know, than enjoy." However, such supernatural joys are now as incomprehensible "as the word of Schoole-men Beatificada Vision is unintelligible." Hobbes's injunction against theological discourse about transcendent states of consciousness—beatific vision and enjoyment—may have a perfectly legitimate explanation in terms of Hobbes's understanding of the scope of philosophical investigation. His injunction in effect anticipates a famous twentieth century ban on pseudo-philosophical questions and discourses—viz., the ending of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) of the Austrian Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein: "What we cannot speak of we must pass over in silence.

Is the term "beatific enjoyment" a misnomer? It certainly was not treated as a misnomer by medieval scholastic theologians. Is it permissible and legitimate to talk about beatific enjoyment today without being accused of engaging in a meaningless intellectual exercise and vain curiosity? I believe that it is, at least pragmatically speaking, insofar as something like what scholastic theologians meant by the term "fruitio" may still be relevant to individuals who have embraced a religious way of life. Furthermore, the very idea of what contemporary moral philosopher John Kekes calls "the rightful enjoyment of our being" comes close to the medieval scholastic understanding of *fruitio ordinata*. A genuinely good and enjoyable human lifestyle, according to Kekes, affirms human dignity and involves integrity of character, reflectivity and autonomy. Medieval scholastic theologians would agree with most details of Kekes's account of rightful enjoyment. They would only add that the object of genuine enjoyment cannot possibly be our own being alone, since we are not alone in this universe, and that enjoyment is not to be sought in this life only, since there is hope for life everlasting.

My aim in this book has been to examine the theological concept of beatific enjoyment (*fruitio*) in light of its origin in the work of St Augustine and in the context of commenting on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

In the first chapter of the study, I demonstrated that, for St Augustine, enjoyment and use are

volitional attitudes with respect to ends and means. St Augustine maintained that only the Holy Trinity ought to be enjoyed, and that everything else in the world, including fellow humans, must be enjoyed in the Holy Trinity. It became clear that St Augustine treats enjoyment as a volitional attitude, but that he also links enjoyment with the notions of delight (*laetitia*) and bliss or joy (*gaudium*). The enjoyment of God requires redirecting the human will and coordinating the whole affective life of the believer. The influence of divine grace proved essential for the effective turning of the will toward God. It was further shown that the enjoyment of God in heaven can be understood as the ultimate realization and fulfillment of our love of God. The state of beatific enjoyment and life in heaven is also characterized by a sense of deep volitional calmness. After having dealt with St Augustine's concept of enjoyment, I discussed the significance of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* for the transmission of St Augustine's views and as the point of departure for the scholastic conversation and debate about enjoyment. St Augustine's distinction between enjoyment and use became the basis of the outline of Lombard's *Sentences*. Lombard did not merely assemble St Augustine's views, but provided a critical assessment of certain aspects of those views. Unlike St Augustine, Lombard stressed the possibility of having an experience of enjoyment already in the present life. In addition to the traditional Augustinian themes, Lombard was interested in the question whether the virtues ought to be enjoyed. He claimed that we should love or enjoy the virtues both for their own sake and for the sake of God.

In the second chapter, I turned toward the state of the debate about beatific enjoyment in the thirteenth century, and I surveyed the main topics and questions in the debate on the basis of the writings (primarily *Sentences* commentaries) of Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, Peter of Tarantaise, Robert Kilwardby, William de la Mare, Giles of Rome and Richard of Middleton. I treated the objects of enjoyment and concluded that only God is the legitimate object of enjoyment. Anything other than God—our fellow humans, the virtues, the faculties of the human being—must be regarded as an object of use or as an object of a weaker type of enjoyment. A question which received partial attention was whether the blessed have a single act

of enjoyment with respect to the Trinity. The standard answer was that beatific enjoyment must be a unique act due to the common divine character and goodness of the persons of the Trinity. I also demonstrated that the term "fruitio" was usually understood to signify an act of the will. Sometimes, however, the term was also taken in the sense of both something intellectual and something volitional. A strong emphasis on the intellectual character of fruitio was found in the writings of William de la Mare. According to de la Mare, beatific enjoyment should be called an act of the intellect. Another remarkable aspect of William's view of enjoyment was the idea of two distinct types of pleasure—a pleasure concomitant with the act of vision and a pleasure concomitant with the act of love of God. The analysis of different thirteenth-century scholastic definitions of "fruitio" revealed two other key aspects of enjoyment—pleasure and rest. It was believed that beatific enjoyment involves pleasure, but a clear distinction between enjoyment and pleasure was not visibly drawn and systematically examined. Rest was understood as a quality of volitional satisfaction and fulfillment. Nevertheless, rest did not imply total volitional capitulation or absence of any volitional activity. Robert Kilwardby, for instance, suggested that the blessed can have multiple acts of enjoyment or use with respect to things other than God, e.g., the virtues. At the end of the chapter, I also discussed briefly the enjoyment of animals. The official view was that animals can be said to enjoy only in a very broad or imprecise sense of the term. Genuine enjoyment can be experienced only by rational agents, such as human beings and angels.

In the following three chapters, I focused upon the Sentences commentaries of major theologians such as John Duns Scotus, Peter Auriol, Francis of Marchia, Walter Chatton, William of Ockham, Robert Holcot, and Adam Wodeham, and less-known theologians, such as Robert Graystones, Richard FitzRalph, John Baconthorpe and Gerard of Siena. In the third chapter, I concentrated upon some of the more prominent early fourteenth-century views of the object and psychology of beatific enjoyment. The examined texts confirm the rise of a certain voluntarist psychology oriented toward the analysis of reflexive acts, free volition, virtues, and passions of the will. Interest in this type of psychology was prompted by the Condemnation

of 1277. The general consensus of the discussed authors is that enjoyment is strictly speaking an act of the will, and there is great interest in the nature of the relation between enjoyment and other acts or passions of the will. The relationship between enjoyment and pleasure was also thoroughly explored. Duns Scotus distinguished between the act of the will and the pleasure accompanying or consequent upon the act. According to Scotus's view, pleasure is a passion of the will caused by the object. Scotus's analysis of enjoyment and pleasure was imitated and deepened by Auriol, Ockham, Chatton, and Wodeham, among others. Auriol's views became the focal point of heated debate as well, partly because Auriol confused love with various forms of pleasure and partly because he believed that complaisance and pleasure are free acts. However, Auriol's equation of beatific love with pleasure or bliss was approved by both Chatton and Wodeham. Ockham, on the other hand, insisted that one should dissociate the love of God from the pleasure or happiness derived from the beatific vision. In the last section of chapter three, I also engaged Durandus's view of the object of beatific enjoyment and discussed this view in light of the criticism of Durandus's contemporaries. Durandus was criticized for maintaining that the act of beatific vision, not God, is the fitting object of enjoyment. According to the view of Durandus's opponents, Durandus had inappropriately accentuated the subjectivity of beatific enjoyment.

I discussed the problem of the possibility of differentiated enjoyments of the Holy Trinity in the fourth chapter of the book. The main question was whether an individual can enjoy the essence of God without the three persons or one divine person without the others. This question became very popular probably because it offered the opportunity to test the applicability of ordinary Aristotelian logic to the doctrine of the Trinity. The question also proved challenging from the standpoint of the very possibility of providing satisfactory theological explanation of the mystery of the Trinity. We saw that Scotus and, to some extent, Chatton allow the possibility of having a vision or an enjoyment of the divine essence alone or of one divine person apart from the others. Scotus and Chatton, however, are exceptional in this respect because everyone else discussed in this chapter disagrees about the possibility of enjoying

the essence of God without the persons or one person apart from the others. Especially interesting is Ockham's fideistic approach to the problem of differentiated enjoyments. He argued that since we are not explicitly asked to believe that there are differentiated visions or enjoyments with respect to the Trinity, we should simply eliminate the question as irrelevant. We also observed different styles of trinitarian explanation or investigation—one based on metaphysics, in the case of Scotus, Auriol and Baconthorpe, and another based on syllogistic analysis, in the case of Chatton, Ockham and Wodeham.

In the last chapter of the study, I focused upon the question of the contingency of beatific enjoyment. At the beginning of the chapter, I related the discussion of the contingency of *fruitio* with the novel conceptual changes in the method of theological analysis. The treatment of enjoyment was mainly influenced by the non-metaphysical contractual model (*pactum*) of the relationship between God and the religious believer. God's decrees were viewed as the terms of a contract which can, in principle, be replaced by a wholly different system of divine ordination. It became evident that Scotus, Ockham, Chatton, Holcot, Wodeham and even FitzRalph admit a certain level of contingency in the experience of beatific enjoyment. For Scotus, the will is always free in itself even though God must sustain its enjoyment perpetually. Ockham thinks that the will can reject beatitude, turn away from the beatific vision, and even hate God if hatred becomes a righteous act. He does state, however, that the will of the blessed is totally passive with respect to the beatific acts insofar as they are caused and conserved by God. Chatton differentiates between a vision-based and a discursion- or abstraction-based enjoyment and claims that the will is entirely passive only with respect to the visionbased enjoyment. He also believes that the blessed can sustain and prolong the beatific acts once they have been caused by God. Holcot considers various scenarios allowing the suspension of enjoyment as well as the co-presence of love and hatred of God in one and the same subject. He maintains that beatific enjoyment is partially natural and partially supernatural. He also thinks that the blessed cannot have absolute certainty regarding the continuation of their beatitude. God can deceive the blessed. Wodeham argues that the will can love and enjoy

God actively, both in the present life and in heaven. In heaven, the will loves God necessarily through an act of non-elective love. Nevertheless, the will retains a certain amount of independence insofar as it is always capable of eliciting an act of elective love. Thus, to keep the blessed continually fastened to Him, God must fortify their wills. From the group of early fourteenth-century thinkers whose views were examined, only Thomas Anglicus (Scotus's harsh critic), Peter Auriol and Francis of Marchia maintain that the will in heaven operates by necessity. According to Auriol's position, the will cannot resist the pull of the beatific object once it is seen clearly and it becomes immobilized. Marchia concurs with Auriol, even though Marchia argues the point differently. I finished my discussion of the contingency of beatific enjoyment by exploring Robert Graystones's extensive account of the compatibility between freedom and necessity. I concluded that the blessed, according to Graystones, are free to choose or do anything other than what is or involves a sin. In essence, the blessed are absolutely impeccable. In this life, however, our personal experience teaches us that we do not desire God of necessity.

[Renewal Within Tradition](#): Series Editor:
Matthew Levering

Matthew Levering is the James N. and Mary D. Perry, Jr. Chair of Theology at Mundelein Seminary. Levering is the author or editor of over thirty books. He serves as coeditor of the journals *Nova et Vetera* and the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*.

About the Series

Catholic theology reflects upon the content of divine revelation as interpreted and handed down in the Church, but today Catholic theologians often find the scriptural and dogmatic past to be alien territory. The *Renewal within Tradition Series* undertakes to reform and reinvigorate contemporary theology from within the tradition, with St. Thomas Aquinas as a central exemplar. As part of its purpose, the Series reunites the streams of Catholic theology that, prior to the Council, separated into neo-scholastic and *nouvelle théologie* modes. The biblical, historical-critical, patristic, liturgical, and ecumenical emphases of the *Ressourcement* movement need the dogmatic,

philosophical, scientific, and traditioned enquiries of Thomism, and vice versa. Renewal within Tradition challenges the regnant forms of theological liberalism that, by dissolving the cognitive content of the gospel, impede believers from knowing the love of Christ.

[See the website for pertinent volumes](#)

[The Culture of the Incarnation: Essays in Catholic Theology](#) by Tracey Rowland [Emmaus Academic, 9781945125171]

In this collection of essays, distinguished Australian theologian Tracey Rowland takes up the relationship of Christ and culture, broadly understood. She contrasts the principles undergirding what St. John Paul II called a "culture of death" with those required for the flourishing of a humanism that flows from the grace of the Incarnation.

Rowland returns frequently to the theological insights of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, to whose thought she is deeply indebted. Drawing upon the Augustinian and Thomist traditions of political theology, she offers a trenchant theological critique of liberalism in all its forms, with attention to our modern attraction to false utopias and accommodationist impulses.

The nine essays in this volume engage such perennial topics as the place of natural law, the theological status of the "world," and the nature of true humanism, along with timely topics such as the retrieval of the sources of Catholic resistance to Communism and what is now commonly called cultural Marxism. Rowland's inimitable voice, keen wit, and penetrating insight into the distinctiveness of Catholic truth make this book a landmark volume as the Church today revisits anew its relationship to the world.

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Excerpt: This is a collection of essays that have previously been published in separate journals over the past decade. In one way or another, they each take seriously the idea that the Incarnation was the greatest revolution in world history. When the Word became flesh, a new era of grace began, redemption from the effects of the first sin became possible, and humanity found itself in a sacramental cosmos. As St. Thomas Aquinas expressed the idea poetically, *Et antiquum documentum, Novo cedat ritui: ancient rites have now departed; newer rites of grace prevail.*

These newer rites of grace opened the gates to a Christian humanism and a whole cultural order built upon it. St. John Paul II described such a culture as a civilization of love and contrasted it with a culture of death. Pope Benedict XVI described the culture of death as a dictatorship of relativism. These two men, who were arguably two of the finest scholars ever to occupy the Chair of St. Peter, shared a quarter century of intellectual partnership. During this time, they offered the world a theological analysis of the current crisis in which Western culture finds itself. The essays in the present volume amplify this analysis.

The first essay addresses the arguments by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI against correlating the Catholic faith to the intellectual fashions and social practices of the times. The correlationist project reached the zenith of its popularity in the 1970s, though it has never completely died out and enthusiasm for the project can still be found among clergy and school teachers who came of age during the 1960s, when the project was first promoted. At the time, Ratzinger suggested that the Church is not a haberdashery shop that updates her windows with each new fashion season, and he described such projects in the field of liturgical practices as "infantile claptrap."

The second essay addresses a related topic of Ratzinger/Benedict's understanding of the world in salvation history. This was initially written in response to critics who argued that Ratzinger was hostile to the world because of his Augustinian inclinations. It is certainly the case that theologians steeped in patristic scholarship were much less likely to support correlationism than those whose early formation had been in scholasticism, and many of those with a scholastic education in their seminary did indeed buy the argument that correlationism was merely a modern analogue for what Aquinas had done with Greek thought in the thirteenth century. In this second essay, however, it is argued that these two dispositions (pro-correlationism and anti-correlationism) had little, if anything, to do with an alleged different attitude toward the world on the part of Aquinas and Augustine. The idea that theologians can be grouped into two classes, the grace sniffers and the heresy sniffers, and that Thomists are by nature grace sniffers and that Augustinians are by nature heresy sniffers, is here challenged.

The third essay is also addressed to the alleged difference in approach to the world by Thomist and Augustinian scholars, though it is not narrowly confined to the scholarship of Ratzinger as a supposed showcase of Augustinian thinking.

The fourth essay follows the trajectory set by the previous two by explaining that Ratzinger had an understanding of the theological virtue of hope different from that of secular social theorists, especially from the ideas of Ernst Bloch. Bloch did have an influence on some Catholic theologians, most notably Johann Baptist Metz, but certainly not over Ratzinger. One reason for Ratzinger's opposition to secularist analogues for the theological virtue of hope and to the whole correlationist project is that he believed that social theories are not theologically innocent. Many contemporary social theories are secularist mutations of classically Christian or Jewish ideas, and thus, to correlate the faith to them is to engage in a project of self-secularization. Such projects confuse the faithful by giving the impression that mutated concepts are consistent with Christian concepts and, so, lead to a general lowering of the intellectual horizons of the faithful, encouraging theological illiteracy as the secularist language is taken up and used in preference to specifically

Catholic idioms. Each time this is done, something of the richness and complexity and even multidimensional nature of the Catholic vision is lost. This was a problem well understood by the late and great Cardinal Francis George of Chicago. In his doctoral dissertation, he concluded that "cultural forms and linguistic expressions are, in fact, not distinguished from the thoughts and message they carry as accidents are distinguished from substance in classical philosophy. A change in form inevitably entails also some change in content. A change in words changes in some fashion the way that we think." The difficulty of separating concepts from their cultural traditions and transposing them into the idioms of an alternative and often rival tradition has also been a recurring theme in the philosophical works of Alasdair MacIntyre.

The fifth essay broadens the discussion by bringing in ideas from St. John Paul II and examining how the two pontiffs engaged with the concept of culture at its most general. Here, following the categories typically used in German scholarship, it is argued that culture can be examined in at least three dimensions: (i) as a civilization, or what the Germans call a Kultur, (ii) in the sense of ethos or the general character of an institution, and (iii) in the sense of what the Germans call Bildung, the culture or education of a person. It is further suggested that the publications of St. John Paul II offer a wealth of material on culture understood in the first and second sense, while the publications of Ratzinger/Benedict are more strongly focused on culture understood in the third sense.

The sixth essay takes the form of a lecture to World Youth Day pilgrims who were about to embark on a tour of Poland for the first time. This lecture was, therefore, written to give people born after 1989 a 101-level introduction to the Polish experience of Communism. While it is not an explicitly theological piece like the other essays, and while those with strong memories of the 1980s may well decide to skip over it, it does serve as a good introduction to the seventh essay, which is on the role of the Polish intelligentsia in the destruction of Communism. This seventh essay showcases how the Catholic faith, if followed by a significant percentage of any given population, can transform a debased, vulgar, and even brutal social order. The Polish Solidarnosc' movement was all about turning a culture of death into a civilization of love.

In stark contrast to a Communist culture or a liberal culture taking the form of a dictatorship of relativism, a significant component of the culture of the Incarnation is respect for the natural moral law or human ecology. Thus, the eighth essay addresses this topic and, in particular, ways of effecting an agreement between Thomist scholars and those who approach the subject of natural law from the perspective of the nuptial mystery. Since the time this essay was published in 2008, other scholars such as Thomas Joseph White, O.P., and Edward T. Oakes, S.J., have recommended the work of Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835-1888) as a useful bridge between the two perspectives. Arguably the scholarship of both Servais Pinckaers, O.P. (recommended in this essay), and that of Scheeben can both form useful connections between the two groups of theologians, who are already in strong agreement that there actually is a natural law (postmodern philosophy notwithstanding).

The final essay was initially written for presentation at an ecumenical symposium, and it therefore addresses the ways in which a Catholic understanding of the humanism and culture of the Incarnation differs from variations to be found within Calvinist intellectual circles. It was written before the author discovered the short story "The Treading of Grapes" by the Orcadian writer George Mackay Brown (1921-1996). The story takes the form of three homilies delivered on the theme of the Wedding Feast of Cana, and this essay presents the reader with these three completely different "takes" on Christianity. The first homily, delivered in 1788 by a Calvinist Presbyterian minister, was down on every kind of human enjoyment from wine to party dresses, berating the flock for spending too much money on their wardrobes and drinking too much at weddings. This minister compares their enjoyment of ale to piglets sucking on the teats of a sow. The second homily is delivered in the twentieth century by a modern liberal Protestant minister who uses the homily to explain that Jesus did not really turn water into wine. There was no miracle: Jesus was simply a good organizer who knew that his apostles were big drinkers and that, unless he saw to it behind the scenes, supplies would be insufficient and the host of the event could have found himself embarrassed. On this account, Jesus was a responsible person and, therefore, a forward planner. Finally, one is treated to a homily

by a Catholic priest delivered in 1548. Rather than being critical of the joys of life (beer, wine, and party dresses) or denying the reality of miracles, the priest tells his congregation that, at the wedding feast of the Lamb (of which Cana is merely a foreshadowing), they will all be princes. Therefore, he says, "I will call you Olaf the Fisherman and Jock the Crofter no longer but I will call you by the name the Creator will call you on the last day—Princes! Prince Olaf! Prince Jock!" Within a sacramental cosmos, not only is it possible for Christ to turn water into wine, but He can turn wine into blood and raw human beings into saints and members of a royal priesthood.

It is hard to find a better literary portrayal of the humanism of the Incarnation and the dramatic contrasts between a classically Calvinist, contemporary liberal, and a deeply Catholic cosmology. As Alison Gray wrote in George Mackay Brown: No Separation, "the contemplative attitude finds a 'quarry of images' in a pre-Reformation sensorium within which Mackay Brown embraces not only a wild beauty but also vanished communities; 'the old walls of Churches and Monasteries, the defaced ruins of altars, images, and crosses do cry with a loud voice, that the Romain Catholique faith of Jesus Christ did tread this way.'"

One hopes that we have not yet reached the point where one has to read short stories set in 1548 to get a sense of what the culture of the Incarnation might look like. Nonetheless, we do seem to be in the midst of an intense cosmic battle and the following essays are all variations on this theme of building a culture out of the rubble of secularist mutations so that twenty-first-century Prince Olafs and Prince Jocks (and their princesses!) might know what it means for newer rites of grace to prevail.

A final comment is that readers will find that there are two quotations that re-appear throughout the essays: [Gaudium et Spes §22](#) and a statement from the International Theological Commission's document on Faith and Inculturation. The repetition of these passages was unavoidable because the essays were originally written as stand-alone pieces and the argumentation within them requires the citation of these paragraphs. It is well known that [Gaudium et Spes §22 \[see William Newton analysis of John Paul II's contributions to that document\]](#) was cited more times by John Paul II

than any other paragraph from the documents of the Second Vatican Council because it is the key to the Christocentric interpretation of the Council and to the New Evangelization favored by him and Ratzinger/Benedict.

Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher

edited by Sotiris Mitralaxis, Georgios Steiris, Marcin Podbielski, Sebastian Lalla [Veritas, Cascade Books, 9781498295581]

The study of Maximus the Confessor's thought has flourished in recent years: international conferences, publications and articles, new critical editions and translations mark a torrent of interest in the work and influence of perhaps the most sublime of the Byzantine Church Fathers. It has been repeatedly stated that the Confessor's thought is of eminently philosophical interest. However, no dedicated collective scholarly engagement with Maximus the Confessor as a philosopher has taken place--and this volume attempts to start such a discussion. Apart from Maximus' relevance and importance for philosophy in general, a second question arises: should towering figures of Byzantine philosophy like Maximus the Confessor be included in an overview of the European history of philosophy, or rather excluded from it--as is the case today with most histories of European philosophy? Maximus' philosophy challenges our understanding of what European philosophy is. In this volume, we begin to address these issues and examine numerous aspects of Maximus' philosophy--thereby also stressing the interdisciplinary character of Maximian studies.

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The study of Maximus the Confessor's thought has flourished in recent years: annual international conferences, publications and articles, new critical editions and translations mark a torrent of interest in the work and influence of perhaps the most sublime of the Byzantine Church Fathers.

It has been repeatedly stated that the Confessor's thought is of eminently philosophical interest, and his work is now often approached from a philosophical perspective. We can witness this tendency both in theological works highlighting the philosophical problems and solutions that Maximus proposes (starting from Hans Urs von Balthasar's classic monograph [Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor](#)) and in purely philosophical works, written by academic philosophers for a similar audience (e.g., Torstein Tollefsen's [Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor](#) and [Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought](#)). However, no dedicated collective scholarly engagement with Maximus the Confessor as a philosopher has taken place—and this volume, together with the colloquium on which it is based, will attempt to start such a discussion.

Apart from Maximus' relevance and importance for philosophy in general, a second question arises: should towering figures of Byzantine philosophy like Maximus the Confessor be included in an overview of the history of European philosophy, or rather excluded from it—as is the case today with most histories of European philosophy? Latin Church Fathers such as Augustine or Thomas Aquinas are self-evidently included in the long history of the foundations of European philosophy. However, the equally self-evident omission of Byzantine Fathers

like Maximus the Confessor from such historical overviews of philosophy' does not seem to be justified by any lack of philosophical efflorescence. In that sense, Maximus' philosophy challenges our understanding of what European philosophy is. In this volume, we will begin to address these issues and examine numerous aspects of Maximus' philosophy—thereby also stressing the interdisciplinary character of Maximian studies. And taking into account the above considerations, we will approach his thought as an important element of the history of European philosophy.

This volume is comprised of four parts: (1) First Philosophy: Ontology/ Metaphysics, (2) Epistemology: Knowledge, Apophaticism, and Language, (3) Anthropology: Human Nature, Ethics, and the Will, and (4) Maximus in Dialogue: From Antiquity to Contemporary Thought.

The first part begins with Dionysios Skliris' article. This acts as the actual introduction to this volume, explaining in which way Maximus the Confessor is to be considered as a European philosopher, or rather as a philosopher that provides alternatives to basic tenets of his Western contemporaries as well as to later developments in European philosophy. Following this introduction, Torstein Tollefsen focuses on the relationship of "whole" and "part" in Maximus the Confessor's metaphysics, forming a distinct "Maximian holomerism" on the basis of the notion of the Logoi. Fr. John Panteleimon Manoussakis proceeds to focus on Maximus' understanding of metaphysical motion with reference to Anaxagoras and Kierkegaard—and, indirectly, Origen. In the next chapter, Smilen Markov studies the importance of relation in Maximus' ontology, and particularly in the relationship between creation and the untreated in the context of history. We return to the theory of motion in the last two chapters of the volume's first part, proposing that Maximus' understanding of motion is both a continuation and a radical renewal of Aristotle's theory of motion in the context of an ontology that is markedly different from Aristotle's. Michail Mantzanas offers an introduction to the Aristotelian motion, which is subsequently compared by Sotiris Mitralaxis to Maximus' understanding thereof.

The second part, "Epistemology: Knowledge, Apophaticism, and Language; opens with Fr. Maximos Conostas' account of the nature of

language in Maximus' thought (with reference to Gregory of Nyssa), and with introductory hints concerning the possibility of a Maximian—and Christian—philosophy of language. This is followed by Jordan Daniel Wood's article on the dialectics of apophaticism and Incarnation, unknowability and knowledge, hypostasis and transcendence. Michael Harrington proceeds to focus on Maximus' *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* as a precursor to scientific objectivity through the notion of natural contemplation and its comparison to Pierre Hadot's philosophy. After this chapter on Maximus' positive epistemology, we once again return to his negative epistemology with Natalie Depraz's treatment of Maximus' theo-phenomenology of negation, in which apophaticism is contrasted to negative theology.

The third part, titled 'Anthropology: Human Nature, Ethics and the Will; begins with a "bridge" between theological ontology and (its consequences and implications for) anthropology, i.e., with Fr. Andrew Louth's treatment of the *Logos-topos* distinction (principle of nature-mode of existence) as the basis for a Maximian ontology of the person, human and divine. This is followed by Georgi Kapriev's paper, in which he expounds the basic tenets of Maximus the Confessor's anthropology in comparison to contemporary anthropological inquiry and proceeds to propose that we may find the seeds for solutions to certain contemporary philosophical problems in Maximus' works. Marcin Podbielski provides us with a close textual approach to the meaning of *ῥιπόωρροσ*, a key Maximian term. Karolina Kochanczyk-Boninska studies Maximus' understanding of sexual differentiation, of the distinction—and division—of the sexes in the case of human beings and of its philosophical preconditions.

The final part of the present volume, "Maximus in Dialogue: From Antiquity to Contemporary Thought; is dedicated to discussions of the Confessor's philosophy in comparison to other philosophers and currents of thought, be they Maximus' predecessors, Maximus' contemporaries, or philosophers that appeared later in history. Most articles in this volume take into account a number of philosophers, thinkers, and theologians, but this part is dedicated to deeper comparative approaches, even if most chapters could easily fit in the other parts of this volume as well.

Fr. Nicholas Loudovikos employs the notion of analogical ecstasis in order to proceed to a discussion of Maximus in contradistinction to Plotinus, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Lacan. Stoyan Taney attempts an interdisciplinary approach to Maximus' insights, also proceeding to a comparison of Maximus' notion of man as a co-creator to the modern actor-network theory. Following this, Fr. Demetrios Harper studies the autotomy in reference to contemporary developments in ethics. In the next chapter, Justin Shaun Coyle compares certain Maximian ideas from the *Ambigua* to Bonaventure's theory of exemplarism. Vladimir Cvetkovic studies the oneness of God as a unity of persons in Maximus' thought with the aid of modern theological inquiry, while Georgios Steiris compares the Confessor and al-Farabi on representation and imagination, tracing possible common philosophical sources.

Some contributors give the latinized form of the Confessor's name, Maximus, while others prefer its Greek original, Maximos: we have respected each scholar's choice, as we have also done with their preferences concerning the various editions of primary Maximian sources. As there is an important semantic difference between *Logos* with a capital L, i.e., the second person of the Trinity, and *Logos/Logoi*, the principles of beings, the latter will be written with a small X even at the beginning of sentences or in titles. Unattributed translations of quotations indicate that the respective author translated them.

The international colloquium entitled "Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher," which took place at the Freie Universität Berlin's Institute of Philosophy from the 26th to the 28th of September 2014, formed the basis of this volume—which, however, has since been enriched with further studies relevant to its research focus. Georgi Kapriev's appendix to the volume is a discussion deriving from the colloquium's round table on the theology-philosophy divide and possible reconsiderations concerning its importance today. The chapters by Boston College's doctoral candidates Justin Shaun Coyle and Jordan Daniel Wood were first produced as seminar projects for the Graduate Student Conference on Saint Maximos the Confessor's *Ambigua* to John, organized by Fr. Maximos Constas at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in

Brookline, Massachusetts, during the fall semester of 2014. We are grateful to both Fr. Maximos Conostas and the authors of the two papers for the opportunity to include them in the present volume. We would like to use this opportunity to note the immeasurable importance of Fr. Maximos' translation—the first in English—of the complete *Ambigua*, as well as of his forthcoming English translation of the complete *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, for the future of the study of Maximus the Confessor's thought. We extend our gratitude to doctoral candidates Athanasia Theodoropoulou and Ioanna Tripoula (University of Athens) for their aid in the initial stages of formatting and proofreading.

This volume is dedicated with great gratitude to Fr. Andrew Louth, the renowned patristic scholar and Maximian studies pioneer. Together with the late Hans Urs von Balthasar, Lars Thunberg, and Polycarp Sherwood, Fr. Andrew Louth's arduous work with St. Maximus the Confessor's texts (including the first-ever English translations of substantial parts of [Maximus' Ambigua](#)), thought, and historical presence opened a way, in which initiatives like the present one cannot but claim to be small steps forward. In this flourishing era for Maximian studies, it is certain that future scholars will look with much gratefulness to Fr. Andrew Louth's ongoing Maximian legacy.

[Renewal Within Tradition](#): Series Editor: Matthew Levering

Matthew Levering is the James N. and Mary D. Perry, Jr. Chair of Theology at Mundelein Seminary. Levering is the author or editor of over thirty books. He serves as coeditor of the journals *Nova et Vetera* and the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*.

About the Series

Catholic theology reflects upon the content of divine revelation as interpreted and handed down in the Church, but today Catholic theologians often find the scriptural and dogmatic past to be alien territory. The *Renewal within Tradition Series* undertakes to reform and reinvigorate contemporary theology from within the tradition, with St. Thomas Aquinas as a central exemplar. As part of its purpose, the Series reunites the streams of Catholic theology that, prior to the Council,

separated into neo-scholastic and *nouvelle théologie* modes. The biblical, historical-critical, patristic, liturgical, and ecumenical emphases of the *Ressourcement* movement need the dogmatic, philosophical, scientific, and traditioned enquiries of Thomism, and vice versa. Renewal within Tradition challenges the regnant forms of theological liberalism that, by dissolving the cognitive content of the gospel, impede believers from knowing the love of Christ.

[See the website for pertinent volumes](#)<>

[After Christendom Series](#)

Christendom was a historical era, a geographical region, a political arrangement, a sacral culture, and an ideology. For many centuries Europeans have lived in a society that was nominally Christian. Church and state have been the pillars of a remarkable civilization that can be traced back to the decision of the emperor Constantine I early in the fourth century to replace paganism with Christianity as the imperial religion.

Christendom, a brilliant but brutal culture, flourished in the Middle Ages, fragmented in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, but persisted despite the onslaught of modernity. While exporting its values and practices to other parts of the world, however, it has been slowly declining during the past three centuries. In the twenty-first century Christendom is unravelling.

What will emerge from the demise of Christendom is not yet clear, but we can now describe much of Western culture as "post-Christendom." Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.

This definition proposed and unpacked in *Post-Christendom*, the first book in the *After Christendom series*, has gained widespread acceptance. *Post-Christendom* investigated the Christendom legacy and raised numerous issues that are explored in the rest of the series. The authors of this series, who write from within the Anabaptist tradition, see the current challenges facing the church not as the loss of a golden age but as opportunities to recover a

more biblical and more Christian way of being God's people in God's world.

The series addresses a wide range of issues, including theology, social and political engagement, how we read Scripture, youth work, mission, worship, relationships, and the shape and ethos of the church after Christendom.

[Post-Christendom: church and mission in a strange new world, Second edition](#) by Stuart Murray [After Christendom Series, Cascade Books, 9781532617973]

Western societies are experiencing a series of disorientating culture shifts. Uncertain where we are heading, observers use "post" words to signal that familiar landmarks are disappearing, but we cannot yet discern the shape of what is emerging. One of the most significant shifts, "post-Christendom," raises many questions about the mission and role of the church in this strange new world. What does it mean to be one of many minorities in a culture that the church no longer dominates? How do followers of Jesus engage in mission from the margins? What do we bring with us as precious resources from the fading Christendom era, and what do we lay down as baggage that will weigh us down on our journey into post-Christendom? Post-Christendom identifies the challenges and opportunities of this unsettling but exciting time. Stuart Murray presents an overview of the formation and development of the Christendom system, examines the legacies this has left, and highlights the questions that the Christian community needs to consider in this period of cultural transition.

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Excerpt: Writing *Post-Christendom* has been daunting. It has meant surveying 1700 years of European church history and delving into missiological, sociological, and theological studies. I am grateful to scholars whose research I have learned from, indicating in footnotes where their insights can be accessed. But I realize that complex subjects and periods have often been summarized in a single paragraph or sentence. In a survey, broad brushstrokes do not permit many nuances or discussion of disputed issues.

I hope *Post-Christendom* contains few factual errors or irresponsible judgments, but it engages in what Alan Kreider calls "bunking." Some books engage in "debunking"—critical studies that examine previous research and offer new interpretations of details or challenge unreliable conclusions. These are important and helpful books, providing secure foundations for those who rely on their careful work. But "bunking" is valid too—describing the big picture, presenting a framework, identifying recurrent themes, and exploring implications.

Post-Christendom suggests we are experiencing cultural turbulence as the long era of Christendom comes to an end. It argues that to negotiate this we need to understand Christendom, why it is collapsing, and how we reconfigure discipleship, mission, and church for a new era. It looks at familiar issues from unfamiliar angles, using the lens of post-Christendom. It offers perspectives and resources for Christians and churches no longer at the center of society but on the margins. It invites a realistic and hopeful response to challenges and opportunities awaiting us in the twenty-first century.

The transition from modernity to post-modernity (whatever this means) has received a huge amount of attention. The shift from Christendom to post-Christendom is at least as significant for church and society, but the issues and implications have not yet been explored to anything like the same extent. This book is an introduction, a journey into the past, an interpretation of the present, and an invitation to ask what following Jesus might mean in the strange new world of post-Christendom.

Fourteen years have passed since the first publication of *Post-Christendom*. Although I have been persuaded that a revised and updated edition would be helpful, this has not been a straightforward undertaking. Should this second

edition be a major reworking of the original text or an opportunity merely to tweak it here and there?

This choice is complicated by a number of factors. *Post-Christendom*, as intended, launched a series of books under the *After Christendom* rubric. Eleven books in this series have now been published, expanding on and exploring in greater depth issues discussed only briefly in the first book in the series, and more are coming. I have also continued to write on related themes, most recently *A Vast Minority*, in which I delve more deeply into topics raised in my earlier book and offer fresh reflections on these. But it does not seem appropriate to retrofit this material into a revised edition of *Post-Christendom* or to intrude into areas covered in later books in the series. Furthermore, although unsurprisingly my thinking has developed and I might now nuance some of what I wrote fourteen years ago, rereading the text has not prompted me to want to revise it substantially.

Nevertheless, during the past fourteen years, pertinent research has been published and so this revised edition needs to draw on this and on several books that offer fresh perspectives on the nature of Christendom (and pre-Christendom) and reflections on contemporary expressions of post-Christendom.

There have also been developments in our cultural context and in the Christian community. The term "post-Christendom" is familiar now and its implications are increasingly widely acknowledged. Many have embraced the definition of post-Christendom proposed in the first edition, although some younger readers respond that this is their "normal" and that they have never known anything else. Are we moving into "post-post-Christendom"?

Or is the term becoming obsolete? Perhaps this second edition will be the last.

The first edition was oriented towards Britain and Western Europe. It acknowledged that Christendom took different forms and that post-Christendom likewise will not be monochromatic. I chose not to engage with the very different transition taking place in Eastern Europe. Although I have since learned more about this, it remains largely beyond the scope of this revised edition. The first edition also accepted that the situation in America is different from other Western societies but it gave only limited attention to this. This second edition will

expand that section of the book a little, noting that there are very different views among American writers, researchers, and church leaders as to whether post-Christendom is an emerging reality, an unwarranted analysis of their context, or an unhelpful notion.

As the After Christendom series moves to a new publisher, our intention is that it will become less Eurocentric and include voices from the global church, including North America. Two American authors and one Canadian have already contributed to the series and we hope that more will follow, together with authors from other places experiencing and responding to the demise of Christendom in different ways.

[Theology after Christendom: forming prophets for a post-Christendom world](#) by Joshua T. Searle
[After Christendom, Cascade Books, 9781532617300]

Christianity must be understood not as a religion of private salvation, but as a gospel movement of universal compassion, which transforms the world in the power of God's truth. Amid several major global crises, including the rise of terrorism and religious fundamentalism and a sudden resurgence of political extremism, Christians must now face up fearlessly to the challenges of living in a "post-truth" age in which deceitful politicians present their media-spun fabrications as "alternative facts." This book is an attempt to enact a transformative theology for these changing times that will equip the global Christian community to take a stand for the gospel in an age of cultural despair and moral fragmentation. The emerging post-Christendom era calls for a new vision of Christianity that has come of age and connects with the spiritual crisis of our times. In helping to make this vision a reality, Searle insists that theology is not merely an academic discipline, but a transformative enterprise that changes the world. Theology is to be experienced not just behind a desk, in an armchair, or in a church, but also in hospitals, in foodbanks, in workplaces, and on the streets. Theology is to be lived as well as read.

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Excerpt: What does theology have to say to the "crucified people" who represent the suffering of Christ in the world today? What does theology mean to "the wretched of the earth", to those "non-persons" without status, wealth, or power? How does theology connect with the lived experience of the "poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3), of those who are "sat upon, spat upon, ratted on"? How does theology speak into the plight of the starving, the refugee, the Alzheimer's patient, the cancer sufferer, or the traumatized child caught up in a genocide? What does theology have to say to the homeless people on the streets of our cities who die in solitude, unknown and unpitied without anyone even to mourn their loss?

This book is the product of a long-term endeavor to discover a vision for the renewal of theology that can address these questions and speak prophetically into these situations. The main aim is to envision a rejuvenated theology that can stimulate the emergence of a renewed Christianity in a post-Christian age. My key contention is that theology has a role akin to that of a midwife bringing to birth a dynamic Christianity that is attuned to the signs of the times and orientated towards the Kingdom of God. This emerging theology will put compassion, creativity and freedom at the heart of Christian life and will be more concerned with the transfiguration of the world than with the revival of the church. My

upbringing, temperament, and training have instilled in me the conviction that theology must engage with the basic questions of life in the world in order to elucidate and, if possible, to overcome the urgent problems of concrete existence. The emergence of post-Christendom offers an auspicious occasion to reflect on these problems and to navigate a new course for theology.

In the present "Secular Age" a deep crisis has engulfed theology. I have a presentiment that the judgement of God is upon Christian theology. The stifling rationalism of systematic theology and the dubious endeavor to establish Christian doctrine on a dogmatic foundation have enfeebled Christian witness and enervated the spiritual vitality of theological reflection. Theology has been marginalized or ignored altogether, as theologians have been slow to grasp the magnitude of unprecedented developments in biotechnology, the emergence and expansion of international terrorism and the so-called "clash of civilizations;" the rise of religious fundamentalism, the appearance of lethal and incurable diseases, a major global financial crisis and a sudden resurgence of fascism and nationalism throughout the world.'

The term "Christendom" describes "a social order in which, regardless of individual belief, Christian language, rites, moral teachings, and personnel were part of the taken-for-granted environment." The signs of the times indicate that this social order is fading as society transitions into a new era of post-Christendom. The terminology of post-Christendom is finding resonance among a growing number of theologians and Christian leaders. Post-Christendom can be understood as an emerging cultural and spiritual condition. The world is on the brink of a radical, revolutionary change. The consequences of these changes for Christian faith in the world are, as yet, unknowable. What is clear is that spiritual values are disintegrating under the constant assault of powerful dehumanizing forces in today's society. In this new authoritarian age, a new world is coming into being - a world that is moved not by the Christian values of love, compassion and solidarity, but by power, by the racial politics of blood and soil, and the demonic power of collective national identity and the media-fabricated "will of the people:'

All these and an innumerable host of other contemporary phenomena indicate that, in the words of one prominent commentator, "humanity is approaching a zero-point of radical transmutation:" The world is living through a dangerous era of dehumanization and God-forsakenness. Human dignity is degraded in a consumer society in which "relations between people assume the guise of relations among things." The present "moral apocalypse" is expressed in the increasing mechanization and digitization of life through the technological revolution and the renunciation of spiritual values. The world in this new age is dominated by information and communication. The global telecommunications revolution and the powerful forces of globalization and the mechanization and exploitation of the natural world have brought humanity to the edge of an apocalyptic precipice. According to Jürgen Moltmann, the social and ecological convulsions in our age betoken "nothing less than a crisis in human beings themselves. It is a crisis of life on this planet, a crisis so comprehensive and irreversible that it can justly be described as "apocalyptic."

Critical questions must be asked about why theology seems to have contributed so little towards the elucidation and resolution of the spiritual crisis of our times. This crisis has engendered a passionate thirst for deep and authentic spiritual life. This spiritual thirst follows a long period of relentless exposure in the parched desert of secular materialism, which has left the world virtually bereft of spiritual values of love, truth, and freedom. We are now living in a time of creative forces, in which foundations are being shaken, old certainties are disintegrating and new solutions to the great issues of our times are being sought. The world is being convulsed by elemental powers, the heavens are being shaken, and people's hearts are failing them for fear of what is coming to the world. The world is passing through a painful period of "ontological insecurity." "Everything solid evaporates, all things sacred are desecrated" and the beleaguered people of the earth are reduced to "the semblance of broken puppets" or of "bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind."

The signs of the times betoken a crisis of compassion and the commencement of a new faithless age in which people have lost reliable

criteria for distinguishing between love and hate, freedom and slavery, and truth and falsehood. Christians must now face up fearlessly to the challenges of living in a "post-truth" age in which deceitful politicians present their media-spun fabrications as "alternative facts" The followers of Christ must be prepared morally and intellectually for an enduring spiritual struggle in defense of gospel values. Any attempt to evade these challenges by clinging to sugary optimistic dreams about imminent revival amounts to a hypocritical collusion in the decline and degradation of the world. This book is an attempt to enact a transformative theology for these changing times that will equip, empower and encourage the global Christian community to take a stand for the gospel in an age of cultural decline and despair. The overriding aim is to envision theology in terms of prophetic redress of urgent and pressing issues in the world today.

If it appears that Christianity is passing through its twilight period and entering the darkness of night, it should be remembered, in the words of Berdyaev, that "the night is no less resplendent than the day, no less divine. The night is illuminated by the stars and brings to light that which is invisible during the day:" Accordingly, amid these crises a new movement of the Holy Spirit can be discerned. This movement defies the dehumanizing tendencies in contemporary society. It aims for the rediscovery of the true meaning of Christianity in terms of the creation of a global community of solidarity. This community radiates the gospel values of kindness, compassion, truth, solidarity and justice. Within this global Christian community, the gospel is emerging as a transformative and world-shattering message of the good news concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In these times of transition from Christendom to post-Christendom, the gospel can become a powerful "historical force for the humanization of the world." This gospel message, purified from deadening legalism and degrading notions of substitutionary propitiation for divine wrath, has a new basis not in judgement and retribution, but in divine-human creativity, compassion and the indestructible power of resurrection life. The gospel is a message not only of individual salvation, but of the transfiguration of the world in the power of the resurrection.

The cultural tide has now turned and the church, unfortunately, has found itself stranded on a sandbank of social and political irrelevance.

Thinking Outside the Box

The basic argument of this work is that the emerging post-Christendom context demands a wholesale reenvisioning of theological formation and even of theology itself. Theology needs to be shaken to the foundations in light of the new reality of post-Christendom. This book is not a compendium of practical suggestions about how to produce more effective teaching environments and successful learning outcomes. The aim, rather, is to imagine and envision, rather than merely to describe and explain, a way of forming people for mission in today's post-Christendom context. This book, in other words, is more concerned with the first-order question concerning the truth that theology aspires to elucidate than with the methods, models and techniques of learning and teaching theology.¹ The book aims to make visible the powerful currents of philosophical and cultural change that surge beneath the froth of here today, gone tomorrow education policies and church initiatives.

The reenvisioning of theological formation in post-Christendom requires a reimagining of the nature, scope and aim of theology in general. There is now a broad consensus that "our theological convictions should influence our approach to education and spiritual formation." As Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza remarks, "The crucial issue for theological education is: what constitutes good theology?" and she maintains that, "the reform of theology is the condition for the reform of theological education." This book thus considers the nature, aim and scope of theology with the aim of formulating an account of Christian formation that can elucidate and transform the contemporary world, which is transitioning into a spiritual condition to which some have applied the label, "post-Christendom." The following study will be concerned with fundamental questions concerning how theology can be reconstructed in light of the changes associated with this new phenomenon.

The post-Christendom shift involves not only social and political changes, but a deep, tectonic metamorphosis in thinking, culture and relationships

which impinge upon the pressing spiritual issues of our times.

Adjustment to the new configuration is difficult because it requires the kind of clear-sighted vision and bold, prophetic leadership that Christendom churches have singularly failed to produce. Christendom churches have thus tended to respond slowly or half-heartedly to these momentous changes. As John Douglas Hall laments, "Why is there such a reluctance to recognize this great transition through which the Christian movement is passing? Why do Christians in our context so consistently resist the opportunities for genuine discipleship that historical providence has opened up to us just at this point?"

Part of the answer to this question can be found in the failure of Christendom to imagine an appropriate and attainable vision of theological formation that can connect transformatively with the deep issues of life in the world today. The formation deficit, in turn, can be attributed to a feeble and compromised theology that has subordinated life in the spirit to systems of required dogma. If theological formation is to be reenvisioned for a post-Christendom age, theology itself must undergo a radical transformation, corresponding to what one philosopher called a "transvaluation of values."

It is sometimes difficult to envision what the future might hold for theology and Christian formation. This is because we are sometimes so assimilated into systems of administration and acculturated within set paradigms of academic theory and practice that it is difficult even to think without the aid of familiar categories and concepts. As the existentialist philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), lamented: "How shall I talk of the sea to the frog, if he has never left his pond? ... How shall I talk of life with the sage, if he is the prisoner of his doctrine?" Often the very proximity implied by immersion conceals important aspects of one's ethos and practice and the invisible layers of tradition that lie behind them. The deep-rootedness of established patterns of thinking and behavior can stifle creative thinking about how to break out of the current impasse. Such habituation runs deep and even if we break out of accustomed ways of thinking, there may be other external hindrances that can limit the horizon of what is possible.

Perhaps this is one of the advantages of being a relative outsider. Although I am a full-time lecturer at a theological college, I am part of a Baptist community that is a minority even within the dwindling Christian community of post-Christendom Britain. Moreover, as a Baptist nurtured by the Anabaptist vision, I am on the margins even of this minority community. I do not see anything particularly virtuous in any of this; it is a simple fact or consequence of various circumstances, rather than any attainment on my part. Since this is in many ways a very personal work, in order to give readers a perspective on how I came to my conclusions, it seems appropriate to begin on a personal note with a brief narration of the circumstances that led me to write this book.

The aim of this book is to present an overview of some of the challenges and opportunities confronting theology in a post-Christendom context and to offer proposals about how to address the current state of crisis. This book is written in the conviction that theology has reached a crucial phase in its historical development. The great need today is fear of the future. Being afraid of the future, one finds it easier to take refuge in history, as memory and nostalgia supplant vision and creativity. Therefore, the future can be perceived only through an optic of faith and hope; normal sight is inadequate to the task of envisioning the future of theological formation in the new cultural reality of post-Christendom—"Only in hope will we be saved" (Rom 8:24).

Structure of the Argument

The book, in the first chapter, begins with an elucidation of the nature, aims and scope of theology. The second chapter explores the link between theological formation and prophetic vocation. The next chapter builds on this foundation in order to account for the socio-cultural factors that have contributed to the marginalization of academic theology in post-Christendom. Against this backdrop, chapter 4 follows a well-established approach that refuses to consider mission and theological formation as two separate tasks. Once considered practically synonymous with "evangelization," the word, "mission," now has a much wider currency, encompassing not only proclamation (kerygma), but also community (koinonia) and service (diakonia). This chapter discusses the implications of this broadening of

mission and the challenges and opportunities presented by post-Christendom in relation to theological formation. This chapter will indicate the need for theology to break out of its captivity to church structures by realigning itself with the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 5, accordingly, reflects theologically on the meaning and significance of the Kingdom of God as the focal point of theological formation. In light of these reflections, the aim of the next chapter is to understand how specific Kingdom imperatives apply to diverse contexts of theological formation. The concepts of freedom, compassion, and creativity are invoked as useful points of departure for thinking about the nature and role of theological formation in post-Christendom. Chapter 7 considers the interrelation of the church, the academy, and the public sphere and discusses the contribution of a post-Christendom perspective to the emerging field of Public Theology. This chapter also examines the broader cultural shifts in the focus of theological research away from knowledge and truth towards interpretation and theory and makes proposals about how the post-Christendom Christian college or theology faculty can reimagine itself as a hub of transformative knowledge. The final chapter illustrates how a transformative vision of theology in post-Christendom can be applied towards the renewal of Christian community in these times of transition. This chapter draws on the experience of the Northumbria Community as an example of how Christian faith can become relevant, credible and compelling even in the seemingly hostile conditions of the post-Christendom shift. <>

[The Schism of '68: Catholicism, Contraception and Humanae Vitae in Europe, 1945-1975](#) edited by Alana Harris [Palgrave Macmillan, 9783319708102]

[The Schism of '68: Catholics, Contraception and 'Humanae Vitae' in Europe, 1945-1975](#) is a genuinely groundbreaking collection, where international and interdisciplinary new scholarship explores the relationship between Roman Catholicism and global developments in sexuality and women's reproductive rights in the 'radical 1960s'. The authors examine the ways in which ordinary Roman Catholic men and women, as well as the Vatican and the news media across Europe and the world, responded to the 'sex problem'

presented by the development of the anovulant pill in the late 1950s and its rejection as an acceptable form of birth regulation through Pope Paul VI's infamous encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. The collection brings together historians of gender, sexuality and modern Catholicism to discuss the differing reactions to and reception of the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical by Catholic laity and clergy, episcopacies, medical professionals and media outlets across Europe. In demonstrating how these debates, and the Roman Catholic Church's important role within them, interacted with the social and sexual countercultures of the 1960s, the collection makes an essential contribution to a growing historiography of radical social change in the 1960s. It also provides new perspectives and approaches that enrich the historiography of sexuality, of gender, and of religion. In common with all volumes in the 'Genders and Sexualities in History' series, [The Schism of '68: Catholics, Contraception and 'Humanae Vitae' in Europe, 1945-1975](#) presents a multifaceted and meticulously researched scholarly collection, and is a sophisticated contribution to our understanding of the past.

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Introduction: The Summer of '68—Beyond the Secularization Thesis by Alana Harris
 In 1960, a year before the introduction of Searle's contraceptive pill 'Conovid' to the British market,' the married layman, Taunton school-master and co-founder of the annual 'Catholic People's Weeks' (first held at Wadham College, Oxford in 1945) published *Sex and the Christian*. Produced within the Burns and Oates 'Faith and Fact' series, this scholarly but highly accessible pamphlet advocated a Christian approach to sex and the 'formation of a solid doctrine of sexuality based on the facts of revelation and of science'. As Trevett opined in the opening pages:

We have had enough of Sunday piety and the Christian-shut-up-in-the-castle mentality. We cannot go on forever trying to reconcile papal encyclicals on marriage with the Hollywood code by which most of our friends more or less live. ... Mere pious exhortation, mere negative warnings are useless against this sort of barrage. We must look for weapons in a better armoury. Peter Maurin never tired of calling on Catholics, clerical and laity, to bring out what he would not surely call,

were he alive, the 'nuclear' forces of the Church's doctrine. Only truth can shatter falsehood, only the dynamic force of revelation can bring all that is genuine and good in the modern desire for a human and humane approach to love and sex into the great creative and redemptive synthesis which our Lord has achieved for our race. If this book can give a few pointers to this living spring of doctrine, it will have served its purpose.

In chapters surveying sources as diverse as the Kinsey report and the work of Jung, coupled with sacramental theology and justified with the quip that 'the patron of the Christian sexologist is not the ostrich', Trevett was representative of a reforming strand of progressive theologians, confessors, doctors, psychologists and educated laity in Britain, but most particularly on the Continent, seeking to present 'Catholic truth in the scientific age'. As Trevett surmised:

The sex problem is one of the most acute of our time; it offers the Christian a great opportunity. He must not think he has answered every question by quoting Canon Law. Law is no substitute for theology, still less for love.

This volume surveys the ways in which ordinary Catholic men and women, as well as the Vatican and the news media across Europe and the world, responded to the intensification of the 'sex problem' presented by the development of the anovulant pill in the late 1950s and its rejection as a licit form of birth regulation through Pope Paul VI's infamous encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (HV) on 25 July 1968. That Reginald Trevett's call for the prioritization of the experiences of the laity over male celibates continued to speak years later into this febrile debate—despite the author's clear rejection of artificial barrier contraception and cautious sanction of the Knaus-Ogino or 'rhythm method's—is hinted at by the photograph on the front cover of this edited collection. Taken in the Oxford University Parks in the Summer of 1968 by Paddy Summerfield, then a young man wrestling (as many within his generation) with the implications and actualities of the 'sexual revolution' and the socioeconomic changes wrought by affluence, the young woman sunbathing, reading and musing is evocative of the many enquiring Christians in the 1960s whose loyal dissent led to an irreparable rift in the church. It is their attempts to reconcile

their faith with, as Trevett called it, 'the "sexual climate" of our times', and their anguished engagement with and interrogation of the papal prohibition, which form the subject of this book.

This edited collection brings together historians of gender, sexuality and modern Catholicism to discuss the differing reactions to and reception of the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical by Catholic laity and clergy, episcopacies, medical professionals and media outlets across Europe. It situates the Vatican's highly controversial determination that the use of 'artificial' contraception by Catholics is 'intrinsically wrong' within the longer trajectory of debates about 'birth control' and the role of sex within companionate marriage emerging since the Second World War. In demonstrating how these debates, and the Catholic church's important role within them, interacted with the social and sexual countercultures of the 1960s, it seeks to make an essential contribution to a growing historiography exploring 'around '68'. It also aims to contextualize and illuminate a lived history of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and its afterlife, so often written from a predominantly theological perspective, by exploring the gendered, material and metaphysical grounds for heated opposition to and reinterpretation of the Vatican ruling. Common to these historiographical interventions is a focussed interrogation of the 'secularization thesis' as a descriptive and explanatory paradigm, explored through the comparative perspective of fourteen European case studies. The composite picture of this geographically expansive and thematically broad enquiry illuminates the complex and divergent ways in which evolving mentalities about marriage, sexuality and reproduction, as well as conservative reactions (including *Humanae Vitae* itself and its interlocutors), had long histories, resonated with particular national circumstances, and were relayed through transnational networks of activists and intellectuals. The attempts by liberal, progressive Catholics to marry the insights of science, sociology and psychology with church teachings and sacramental theology culminated, ultimately, in an irreconcilable rent within the church, reinforced by the swing towards moral conservatism throughout Europe in the decade that followed. This was intensified through the 'cultural wars' which played out through the papacy of John Paul II and his 'theology of the body' that Herzog discusses in the Afterword. On the cusp of the

fiftieth anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, these theological tensions remain unresolved, as the recent comments of Pope Francis demonstrate. Yet for those Catholics who remained within the church after the furor, at least 78% of whom today support the use of contraceptives, they have found their own solutions and ethical resolutions in living and loving after the encyclical.

Narrating the Sixties: Secularization and the Sexual Revolution

In his most recent, magisterial and comparative survey of European Catholic activists seeking to transform society in accordance with the precepts of the Second Vatican Council, and as a complement to his earlier *The Spirit of '68* volume, Gerd-Rainer Horn has noted the propensity of historians of the 1960s and 1970s to narrate the social and cultural transformations of these decades as 'virtually exclusive secular affairs'. His explanation for this oversight, indeed the marked historiographical silence, is that 'today's historians mostly hail from the secular Left and thus have neither the ideological arsenal of tools nor the relevant political background and interest to discover a religious undercurrent of radical change which appeared to go against the grain.' This observation is certainly true of the first wave of sustained scholarship about the 1960s, epitomized by Arthur Marwick who confined discussion of religion to a mere three pages, and concluded that 'it has to be stated that throughout the sixties the Catholic Church tended to operate as a centre of opposition to all the great movements aiming towards greater freedom for ordinary human beings'. Yet more recent histories of the 1960s continue, for the most part, to ignore the role played by religious actors in the utopian activism, synchronic social movements and sexual reconfigurations of the period, focussing instead on questions of periodization and Eurocentrism. Mark Donnelly, for example, in his revisionist history of the sixties gave but two pages to the religious transformations of the period, concentrating on structural changes such as the 'laws on personal morality [and] levels of Christian church attendance' whilst conversely concluding that although some individuals were 'swinging', 'millions more saw little difference in the ways that they experienced or imagined their daily lives'. A notable exception is found in Gerard DeGroot's *The 60s Unplugged*

where, within a chapter entitled 'Wilted flowers', he described the deliberations of Pope Paul VI and reactions to *Humanae Vitae*, with a focus on the contrast between Latin America's embrace of the prohibition on birth control as a counter to American neo-imperialist family planning agendas supplanting developmental aid.

This secularist agenda also characterized much of the historiography surrounding contraception and sexuality in the post-World War II period, such as Hera Cook's [The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975](#) [Oxford University Press, 978-0199252398], which situates its sole reference to *HUMANAE VITAE* in an unwavering characterization of religion as an inherently and unrelentingly repressive force and the pill as a medical-technological innovation that revolutionized women's lives overnight, opened up the possibility of female sexual pleasure, and liberated them from the tyranny of unfettered childbirth. Daniela Danna's chapter in Gert Hekma's [A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Modern Age](#) [Bloomsbury Academic, 9781847888051] similarly characterized the role of the churches as defensive of the ancien régime, and in a brief discussion of *HUMANAE VITAE* she drew attention to Dutch Catholic exceptionalism in a portrait of otherwise concerted resistance to female emancipation. National surveys of the sexual cultures of twentieth-century Europe have tended to pay slightly more attention to the intersections of newer sexual technologies and cultural mores with the strictures of Catholic teaching. Well before the 'religious turn' in histories of gender diagnosed by Morgan and de Groot in 2013, editors Edner, Hall, and Hekma included extended discussion of the position of the Catholic church on sexology, birth control and queer sexuality in their *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories*. Perhaps the most consistent call for integration and interrogation of sexual and religious cultures has come from Dagmar Herzog, not only within her seminal *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* but also in more recent work identifying the need to move beyond a 'paradigm of liberalization' to recognize the 'many ambivalences and confusions the sexual revolution caused from its inception', not only within national contexts but also between and within churches.

This myopia is particularly marked within the latest scholarship surrounding 1968, which neglects a

religious optic in its exploration of revolutionary phenomena beyond a Western paradigm and is marked by a preoccupation with issues of memory and legacy. Even Frazier and Cohen's stimulating *Gender and Sexuality* in 1968, with its call to explore the 'multiple dimensions of sixties struggles [by expanding] the notion of who and what constituted ...political struggles, protagonists and politics', seems oblivious to the potential of religious actors and theological protesters as candidates for such an extended remit.⁵⁹ Studies of '68 with their genesis in oral histories seem to overcome this oversight in part, such as Ronald Frazer's longstanding [1968: A Student Generation in Revolt](#), complemented and considerably extended by a recent transnational, collaborative project based in Oxford which drew from the oral histories of 500 former activists across fourteen countries. Synthesized in the edited volume *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt*, which included an entire chapter on 'faith', its survey of experiments with worker priests and base communities in France, Spain, Italy and Hungary, alongside the contributions of Catholic trade unions to iconic protests such as the Lip watch factory strike, led these authors to conclude that 'rejecting the path of secularism, religious activists found powerful ways to tie protest to belief.' They concluded: 'the sheer scale of this religious rebellion challenges us to rethink "1968" as an inherently secular moment of transformation. However, despite that volume's discussion of the Second Vatican Council, shifting understandings of family and clerical celibacy, and a separate chapter on gender and sexuality, *Humanae Vitae* is not mentioned once.

What is striking in all these examinations of student militancy and revolutionary activities in the sixties, even in those that do adopt a study of the transformation of Catholicism as their focus, is the paucity of specific analysis of *HUMANAE VITAE* and the reticence of authors to integrate the dissension focussed by the encyclical into wider studies of the agendas of 'liberal' or 'progressive' Catholics. From James Hitchcock's near-contemporaneous assessment of *The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism*, in which there are merely three passing references within an otherwise lucid exploration of post-conciliar reform agendas, to the cursory treatment in Jay Corrin's excellent study of a 'Catholic New Left' in *Catholic Progressives in England After Vatican II* there

remains a telling lacuna within Horn's *The Spirit of Vatican II*, despite his calls for a reappraised 'spiritual 60s'. Common to these narratives is a celebration of a period of theological and political florescence, followed by disillusionment and declension, and an identification of the 'political' in strictly structural, materialist and often male terms. This emphasis clearly overlooks the ways in which the widespread and much more inclusive protests by ordinary women and men against *Humanae Vitae* could complement, complicate and in some instances diversify the strategies and activities of leftist militants, from the protest meetings of the *Katholikentag* described (and illustrated) in Ebner's and Mesner's chapter, to the inherent challenge posed to the Fascist regimes of the Iberian peninsula by any post-conciliar activity. Yet beyond such unequivocally political manifestations, this volume contends that these attempts to reconfigure 'the personal' within official Catholic teachings on love, marriage, family planning and intimate relationships, are inherently 'political' if conceptualized through a New Left and later WLM ideological rendering. These protests therefore challenge a narrow definition of politics, with our compilation broadening out the transnational studies of 'European Left Catholicism' by Horn and Tranvouez within a recent special issue of *Histoire@Politique*. That collection covers innovative new territory but continues to overlook the sociopolitical controversies generated by *Humanae Vitae* and the diversity of lay experiences of the post-conciliar changes.

It is extraordinary, therefore, that a watershed document such as *Humanae Vitae* and the highly sensational and vitriolic ferment that it generated, have been mostly ignored by historians of post-war sexuality and the sixties, and only superficially invoked by historians of religion preoccupied with the secularization thesis. Callum Brown's highly influential *The Death of Christian Britain*, and his follow-up volume *Religion and the Demographic Revolution*, have set the terms of these coterminous debates about 'religious change and gender power', foregrounding the role of increasingly economically autonomous and sexually independent women in refashioning gender relationships, asserting their own contraceptive choices, and thereby disaffiliating from Christian mores. In Brown's corpus there is an explanatory nexus drawn between the reconfigured sexual and

religious landscapes of the 1960s, such that sexual liberation automatically equates to secularization:

The impact of the sexual revolution was so great, so sweeping and intense within Western society, that there were few corners which were not penetrated by liberal ideas. Most famously the Catholic Church's attempt in the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* to uphold opposition to birth control was doomed ... Religion and sex were moving inversely in tandem.

But as the old adage would have it, correlation does not necessarily imply causation. As the extended discussion of the Second Vatican Council and the sexual revolution within Hugh McLeod's *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* illustrated, 'the most enigmatic aspect of the religious upheavals of this period is the role of the "sexual revolution"'. McLeod affirmed that the 'link between sex, gender, and rejection of the church was much clearer in predominantly Catholic counties, because of *Humanae Vitae* and ... abortion', but his overarching conclusion—which this volume demonstrates could equally apply to many Catholics across Europe—is that 'those already detached felt increasingly free to ignore church teaching, while those who remained in the church were claiming a greater freedom to make their own judgments of questions of ethics—and sometimes doctrine too.' All of this affirms that there were, indeed, sweeping religious changes and institutional upheavals in the 1960s, resulting in marked decline in religious observance and communal loyalty in many European settings. Yet as Leslie Woodcock Tender has observed of American Catholicism during this period, extending her earlier study *Catholics and Contraception* which remains the best substantive historical survey in English of the attitudes of Catholics to contraception across the twentieth century, 'Catholics since the 1960s have been at least as alienated by their church's frequently uninspiring liturgies and the impersonality of its very large parishes as by its teaching on sex'. Moreover, she pinpoints one of the paradoxes created by the 'non-reception' of the encyclical by the laity throughout the 1970s, which is taken up in the Afterword: a movement from near-incessant discussion about sex in the 1960s to a deafening silence, as 'unable to speak honestly about contraception, most priests in the wake of *Humanae Vitae* steered clear of

addressing sexual matters generally, even as ...sexual mores were undergoing their most dramatic changes ever.' What emerges, therefore, is a consensus around the diagnosis of a radical transformation in Catholicism across both Western and Eastern Europe, into which the church's position on sexuality is intricately interwoven, although the terms used to characterize this change (disenchantment, dechristianization, etc.) vary. Yet this volume shows that this factor is but one amongst a number of other catalysts, including critiques of social deference and traditional authorities, an increasing emphasis on individualism and authentic self-expression as Charles Taylor has explored, and an openness (or resistance) to a reciprocal dialogue between 'church' and the 'modern world', including the cross-fertilization of theological perspectives with insights from science, psychology, sociology and history, as Talal Asad has investigated.

In this sense, this anthology speaks into the recent agenda advanced by historians of contemporary religion and sexuality to use heuristics such as 'syncopated sex' or 'postsecular sex' to unpick existing narratives which view sexual liberation as a teleological and unequivocal product of the secularization of sexual understanding and practices. The chapters that follow take the theological as well as the sexological aspects seriously in demonstrating that religious understandings were not uniformly or unambiguously displaced by new scientific regimes but persisted and adapted, helping to reconfigure the new sexual landscape, as well as to provide for different constituencies, the rituals and rhetorics needed for its resistance. This approach illuminates a spectrum of Christian responses to social change in the sixties and, as Tim Jones has theorized, the vitality of 'religious culture, ideas and convictions [to] provide rich and complex resources for sexual self-making in the late twentieth century' and beyond. Taking up such calls for a 'post-secular' approach moves the debate beyond now-stale questions of 'whether and when Christianity's cultural hegemony declined', a diagnosis which looks increasingly unstable in the wake of the conservative backlash of the decades that followed with increased traction by the religious right and counter-reaction into the present. Instead, it enables us to open up new possibilities in examining the intersections and interactions between religious and

secular epistemologies surrounding love, sexuality and reproductive technologies and everyday practices within these unstable, shifting and modulating frameworks. These intimate, intertwined narratives of faith, gender and sexuality prompt us to rethink exhausted teleologies surrounding 'modernity', 'secularization' and 'sexual liberation' and begin to explore new vistas in the history of modern sexuality and post-war chronologies.

In 1965, the British Catholic novelist David Lodge published *The British Museum Is Falling Down*, which pivoted around the comically unsuccessful attempts of a Catholic couple to practice the rhythm method. Three years later, in the flurry of promotional interest generated by the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*, the novel was reissued in paperback in the US under the title *Vatican Roulette*. Lodge wrote a new authorial note for the reissue, confessing that if writing the book in 1968 he would not leave the two principal characters with their reproductive dilemma unresolved: 'there is of course only one possible resolution that would be consistent with the realities of their situation, with reason, with modern Christian thought, and with the demands of a comic literary structure.' This anecdote is related within Lodge's recent memoir in which he recalled the difficulties both he and his wife, as committed Catholics, encountered negotiating the church's teaching on contraception. Describing the publication of *Humanae Vitae* as 'like a Catholic equivalent to the secular revolt of youth in America and Europe', he was also frank in confessing the 'improvement in [his] marriage' two years earlier when his wife 'decided to go on the pill, without any prompting ... but with ...unhesitating agreement. Suddenly it seemed a very simple decision.' Lodge's well-known novel—and his life narrative—could be seen as sequels to Trevett's *Sex and the Christian* with which I opened.

Here is a 'human and humane approach to love and sex' which chimes with the personal adjudications and, ultimately, good-faith resolutions made by many Catholics across Europe that are recounted in the chapters that follow. This was, indeed, a 'Catholic equivalent' to the better-known secular revolts of 1968, which laid bare theological, political, gendered and geographic divisions within the church that persist to the present.

Vatican Roulette was no longer the order of the day.

The Vatican's View of Sex: The Inaccurate Conception by Robert T. Francoeur
Trained in Catholic theology by Jesuits and Benedictines, Dr. Francoeur was ordained a diocesan priest in 1958. He was granted permission by the Vatican to marry in 1967 without being laicized. Author of 1972 [Eve's New Rib: 20 Faces of Sex, Marriage and Family](#), and the college text 1991 [Becoming a Sexual Person](#), he taught at Fairleigh Dickinson University and worked regularly with church and clergy groups on sexual and life-style issues. This is a reprint from a 1988 article in the humanist quarterly, *Critical Enquiry*.

Ever since the Vatican II Council debates on birth control and priestly celibacy in the early 1960s, statements by the pope and Vatican officials on sexual morality have made headlines: "Vatican calls masturbation a grave moral disorder." "Pope urges married couples to abstain from sex." "Premarital sex is always immoral." "Church accepts homosexuals but says they must be celibate." "Test-tube babies and artificial insemination condemned as unnatural and adulterous."

Though critics often attack such statements as "reactionary," "Victorian," "out of touch with the real world," and "antisexual," such judgments focus on details rather than on the whole picture. The essence of the current debates over sexual morality in the Catholic church is not the conclusions but the premises. Like every institution, the Vatican has created its own picture of reality. Within that framework and its assumptions, the current pope and Vatican officials adhere to a strict logic. All sex is designed by nature and God for reproduction. Therefore, sex is allowed only for couples in heterosexual marriages when nothing interferes with this goal. In simple terms, any form of sex that does not end in vaginal intercourse—masturbation, oral and anal sex, as well as sex with contraceptives, premarital sex, gay sex, comarital sex, and even lusty thoughts—is "unnatural, disordered and immoral."

Given the knowledge of past ages, these views may have been valid and functional years ago, but in today's world they are antediluvian, vestiges of antiquated physiology and psychology. I will attack those primitive premises shortly, but first let me

prepare for my main argument with a *reductio ad absurdum* diversion. If we accept the premises of the Vatican's view of sex, we are confronted with some ridiculous conclusions ancient theologians never thought of because they lived in a relatively uncomplicated world. We live in a world of contraceptive and reproductive technologies, of in-depth psychological perspectives, and new forms of male-female relationships that were inconceivable before 1900. The Vatican's view of sex is as much in touch with modern human relationships as its view of the sun revolving around a flat world was with the world Copernicus and Galileo knew as real in 1632.

Reduction to absurdity #1: No sexual fantasies. "Impure thoughts," "delectation morosa," lusty fantasies are sinful because they involve mental sexual pleasure that does not climax in reproductive marital intercourse. Pope John Paul II recently warned husbands not to lust after their wives because such physical desire detracts a man from his spiritual goals. (He implied that wives are never tempted to lust after their husbands!) But Kinsey found that 84 percent of husbands and two-thirds of American wives fantasize while making love with their spouse and many of those fantasies are about having sex with a person other than that spouse. Without the variety of those fantasies marital sex often goes flat. Even Jimmy Carter confessed to "lusting in his heart" a few years back. The fantasy enrichment exercises that are a common part of modern sex therapy are totally unacceptable in the Vatican's morality.

Reduction to Absurdity #2: No solo sex. Masturbation is the most common sexual outlet for men and women of all ages. In the Vatican's view it is both "unnatural and disordered." Thus a Catholic teenager who masturbates sins more seriously than if he had fornicated. Fornication is a "disordered act" but natural because it involves vaginal intercourse. (If the teenager used a condom while fornicating he might be more responsible but his sin would be greater than if he allowed the girl to become pregnant!)

Also, a Catholic wife may masturbate to orgasm if she doesn't climax during intercourse, but only if the semen was properly deposited. Whether she can have multiple orgasms is questionable. Her husband is not as fortunate. If physical exhaustion or psychic conflicts about "polluting a madonna mother" (his

wife) keep him from orgasm, he is not allowed to relieve himself.

Reduction to Absurdity #3: No wet fun. Modern physiology tells us healthy men and women have erections or sexual arousal every ninety minutes during Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep. Vatican morality prohibits any Catholic from enjoying this pleasure if he or she wakes up and from relieving the sexual tension by masturbation. One must not enjoy a spontaneous wet dream.

Reduction to Absurdity #4: No barriers. It is perfectly natural and moral for a Catholic couple to make love only when the calendar and clock say the wife is not ovulating, but it is unnatural and disordered for a couple to use natural hormones to prevent ovulation so they can express their love for each other whenever the spirit moves them. Also, even when a wife is pregnant she cannot use a contraceptive because superfecundation is possible. If the wife has intercourse while pregnant and doesn't use a contraceptive she may ovulate again and become pregnant with fraternal twins.

Reduction to Absurdity #5: No breakdown. A couple must be able to consummate their marriage, but a quadriplegic may not know whether or not he can do so. Either he fornicates before the marriage, or he risks entering an invalid marriage that can be annulled.

Other Absurdities: The behavioral exercises devised by Masters and Johnson and widely used in sex therapy are often immoral no matter how much they help the couple become sexually functional. Sensate focus, stop-and-go, partner sexual exam, and pelvic muscle exercises involve sexual arousal but not necessarily vaginal intercourse. Sex surrogates are verboten. A childless husband may not masturbate to obtain a semen sample for fertility testing. And, despite the emphasis on making babies, artificial insemination and surrogate mothers are forbidden.

Behind these and other absurdities is the Vatican's neat logic of Newtonian machines. A cog is a cog. A penis is a penis. A cog has its fixed purpose in a machine and a penis has its proper, "natural" mechanical function as a sperm depositor. Any "playing around" with the "sword" outside its vaginal "scabbard" is dangerous and immoral. But just because a penis functions well in reproduction does not mean it always has to be used for that

purpose, or only for that purpose. The Vatican's penis/ vagina morality exists as if persons were irrelevant. As long as the penis is licensed to the vagina and goes in naked, its penetration is assumed to be morally good.

If, however, one views the sexual organs as parts of a person who is relating with him or herself or with another sexually active person, the psychosomatic character of the relationship becomes the basis of morality. As the authors of a 1977 report sponsored by the Catholic Theological Society suggested, Catholics need to move beyond the Vatican's "prescientific physiology": "It bears repeating, without provision, that where there is sincere affection, responsibility and the germ of authentic human relationship—in other words, where there is love—God is surely present." Although this statement dealt with homosexuals, it is an authentic Catholic position applicable to relations between all sexual persons regardless of their status as straight or gay, single or married, and regardless of the logistics and uses of genital patristics too often attack the Vatican's conclusions about this or that act being disordered, unnatural, and immoral. It is more effective, in my view, to attack the Vatican's principle of sexual mechanics and its refusal to accept erotic pleasure and intimacy as a valuable, morally acceptable goal in human relations.

According to Pope John Paul II we left all pleasure in the Garden of Eden. We are condemned to "work, work, work, work . . ." Fifteen hundred years ago, Saint Augustine created a philosophy of work and pleasure that endures today in the Vatican's inaccurate conception of sex. After a wild life with a mistress and illegitimate child, Augustine joined the Manichean cult that held sex as the worst evil possible. Later, as a repentant Christian bishop, Augustine pictured the moral life as a lifelong conflict between the City of God and the City of Mammon. Sex might be tolerated, possibly, in marriage if it was productive work, but sexual pleasure could never be accepted. Augustine's view of pleasure still prevails in the Vatican today. "Lust of the flesh, insofar as it seeks carnal and sensual pleasures," the pope warns, "makes man in a certain sense blind and insensitive to the deeper values which spring from love and which at the same time constitute love in the interior truth that is its own." The present pope wants married couples

to exercise great control over their sexual impulses and commit themselves to periods of abstinence. Put the Vatican mechanics of sexual parts together with Augustine's association of sexual pleasure with the City of Darkness and you have the roots of Vatican sexual morality.

However, in the most authentic Catholic theology, neither the Vatican nor the pope is "the Catholic church." Both are currently acting as if they are "the church." There has always been what theologians call the "sensus fidelium," the idea that the "the people of God" constitute the church. The Catholic laity has spoken clearly on sexual morality since Vatican II, when the majority of Catholic theologians approved and accepted contraception, thereby confirming the moral judgment of the majority of Catholics that sexual intercourse need not always be open to making babies. They view the pope and the Vatican as being out of touch with the church. This difference in conviction about who and what constitutes the Catholic church is evident in the Vatican's recent move to expel twenty-four American nuns who dared to say publicly that there is a pluralism of views on abortion among dedicated, committed Catholic theologians and laity. The nuns were among ninety-four American Catholic leaders who signed a New York Times advertisement in support of Governor Cuomo and vice-presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro's position in the debate with Archbishop O'Connor of New York. The nuns have refused to back down and have chided the Vatican for its "scandalous" attempt to impose its view of reality on them.

The battle lines are drawn. Umpires like Monsignor Caffarra, president of the Pontifical Institute for the Study of Marriage and Family, blame a half-dozen French, German, and American theologians for causing all the current confusion about the "Church's positions" on sex. These men, Caffarra complains, have "a vision that has accepted without sufficient criticism many 'pseudo-dogmas' of the contemporary culture."

Marsie Silvestro, coordinator for the national Women's Ordination Conference, ignores the Vatican's scramble to find scapegoats and strikes home when she states that the problem with the Vatican's view of sex boils down to the pope's and bishops' "inability to deal as [adults] with sexuality."

More basic, according to Silvestro, is a pervasive fear among the hierarchy that they are "losing their ... power." In his 1983 book [Sexual Practices](#), anthropologist Edgar Gregersen concedes that the conflict between the hierarchy and lay Catholics will "have far-reaching implications for the authority system as a whole." The Vatican may appear to be winning, but the current confrontations have all the appearance of the Nazi Panzers gathering on the Russian front in 1943. Their fire-power appears invincible, but like the Nazis, the Vatican is facing for the first time intelligent, independent-thinking laity and theologians. These Catholics resent being treated as children and told that nothing ever changes or evolves and that sex revolves around making babies. While they believe in some fundamental principles of all morality, these Catholics know that those principles can have different conclusions when radically new situations arise. In the past, sexual morality may have revolved around making babies, but today sensible persons know that the meaning and values of sex and sexual relations go far deeper than the mechanical picture.

A whole new ball game started twenty years ago at Vatican II. The older hierarchical umpires know their power is in jeopardy, yet it is almost as if Galileo never lived. The Vatican umpires still insist on rules that worked before the sexual revolution of the 1960s, patriarchal rules they made for their children. Today, when the umpires shout "Play ball," the nuns, theologians, and lay Catholics often decide to move the game to another ballpark with new rules. They are smart enough to know that they, the "people of God," and not the umpires, are the church. They control the game. That is why the Vatican is taking such vehement stands on even the most insignificant challenges. The whole authoritarian dogmatic hierarchical structure is on the verge of collapse and its support is fading. Like the ecclesiastical judges of Galileo, the Vatican's worst fear is that the world is indeed moving. <>

[Human Dependency and Christian Ethics](#) by Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar [New Studies in Christian Ethics, Cambridge University Press, 9781107168893]

Dependency is a central aspect of human existence, as are dependent care relations: relations between caregivers and young children, persons with disabilities, or frail elderly persons. In this book, Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar argues that many

prominent interpretations of Christian love either obscure dependency and care, or fail to adequately address injustice in the global social organization of care. Sullivan-Dunbar engages a wide-ranging interdisciplinary conversation between Christian ethics and economics, political theory, and care scholarship, drawing on the rich body of recent feminist work reintegrating dependency and care into the economic, political, and moral spheres. She identifies essential elements of a Christian ethic of love and justice for dependent care relations in a globalized care economy. She also suggests resources for such an ethic ranging from Catholic social thought, feminist political ethics of care, disability and vulnerability studies, and Christian theological accounts of the divine-human relation.

Human Dependency, Justice, and Christian Love

Dependency is a central aspect of human existence. We begin life ensconced within and dependent upon the body of another human person, using her body as a source of nutrients, oxygen, warmth, and space. When we emerge into the world as a separate body, we remain utterly dependent upon other human beings to feed us, to keep us warm, to hold us, to talk to and socialize us, to protect us from harm. We are bodily dependent again when we are sick, or when we are disabled, and if we live to old age, we are often dependent on others in the frailty of our final years. And at those points in our lives when we seem most autonomous, we nevertheless remain deeply dependent on others in countless ways that we often fail to acknowledge.

Because dependency is central to human existence, so are relations of dependent care: relations between caregivers and small children, persons with disabilities (permanent or temporary), or frail elderly persons. In fact, such relations take up the bulk of human moral effort, and they are deeply complex. However, as feminist theorists in various fields have shown, much recent Western thought reflects a marginalization of human dependency and dependent care.¹ In keeping with the modern valuation.

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Excerpt: In this book, I argue that much recent Christian ethics, like much modern and contemporary Western philosophy, social theory, and political theory, has failed to adequately address our human dependency. Similarly, dependent care relations have largely been marginalized and rendered problematic in recent understandings of Christian love. Equality is a crucial value, and Christian theology has long asserted the equality of all human persons before God — offering a stronger basis for such equality than secular bases such as rationality and autonomy. Notions of equality have been responsible for many social developments that we hold dear, including the expansion of basic economic and political rights to propertyless men, women, and persons of color, and the abolition of many forms of slavery. The link between equality and autonomy is somewhat problematic, however, because our dependency is also part of the human condition. These two realities, dependency and equality, stand in a paradoxical tension, because when we are dependent on another, there are important ways in which we are not equal to that other, and many groups of persons have had their dependency exaggerated and enforced precisely to exclude them from equality and autonomy. But in creating more egalitarian social structures, we must continue to account for that dependency that is intrinsic to human life, or else we will undercut the very equality we seek. I argue, therefore, that we must acknowledge the centrality of dependency in our theological anthropologies, our understandings

of Christian love, and our conceptions of the relation between Christian love and justice. In other words, Christian theological ethics must integrate human equality with human dependency.

The marginalization of dependency within Christian ethics is an injustice to those who engage in the moral work of dependent care on a daily basis. It devalues their labor in moral terms and reinforces the political and economic devaluation of this work. But the marginalization of human dependency and relations of dependent care is also problematic for the substance of Christian love theologies. These relations are a focal point for engaging a number of foundational issues in Christian ethics.

First, questions about the role of nature — our human nature, and the natural world around us — are particularly relevant in light of dependent care relations. In terms of human nature, Christian theologians offer markedly different understandings of the moral status of our own natural inclinations and desires and our efforts to satisfy them. Are our natural inclinations a source of moral wisdom for human persons, as understood by Roman Catholic natural law theories drawing (in various ways) on the heritage of Thomas Aquinas? Or, is human nature so fallen that Christian love is defined by its radical difference from our "natural" way of loving, as for Anders Nygren or Soren Kierkegaard, for example? What are the implications of either stance for the love and devotion we may be inclined to shower on our dependents, whether they be our children, parents, or clients? Thinking in terms of dependent care relations also re-centers inquiry from the goodness or selfishness of our own inclinations to the moral valence of the inclinations of others. After all, these relations are intended to support others in meeting basic biological needs and fulfilling basic biological inclinations — most notably, the inclination to persist in being, to survive.

The work of care also draws us into the gifts, conflicts, and tragedies of the natural world. Caregivers harness nature's resources to promote the survival and flourishing of the objects of their care. They offer other living things, plants and animals, as food. They learn to facilitate the body's own healing processes and to foster natural developmental pathways. They battle against viruses, injuries, and natural disasters. They shelter their dependents within homes built from organic

and inorganic materials in the world around them. They make claims on moderately scarce natural resources available to meet basic human needs. As we shall see, many Christian ethicists take an overly simplified approach to the moral implications of natural processes. Consideration of dependent care relations calls for a nuanced consideration of the moral implications of our entrenchment in the natural world.

The negotiation of natural scarcity raises a second arena within Christian ethics that takes on new dimensions in light of dependent care relations: what is the relation between love and justice? Some Christian ethicists see justice as sharply distinct from Christian love. For these thinkers, justice seeks its own, and demands its desert through merit or contract. Love, in contrast, does not think of itself and rises far beyond the demands of justice in its self-giving. Other Christian ethicists see justice as a virtue of individual persons and do not give sufficient attention to the structures of injustice within which these virtuous individuals make their moral choices. Most contemporary Christian love theologians do not consider the relationship between love and distributive justice, although they may consider distributive justice separately from their discussions of love. From the perspective of dependent care relations, this omission is deeply problematic. Dependent caregivers do their work within unjust social, political, and economic structures, and their relative privilege or marginalization within these structures profoundly affects their capacity to meet their caring obligations. They require resources such as food, housing, health care, and labor time to provide this care. Justice helps to enable the love expressed through dependent care relations, and injustice can hinder such care or even make it impossible.

In much recent Christian love ethics, the question of distributive justice has been subsumed under the question of "special relations," or relations with kin, friends, colleagues, or other persons to whom we have a particular, intensive bond. As outlined by Gene Outka in his 1971 work, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*, "special relations" are constituted by preference, whereas agape is constituted by abstention from preference: we love someone regardless of whether they are attractive to us or can make a return on our love. The moral problem then becomes one of allocating our love among

preferential and nonpreferential relations, with any decision to favor our preferential relations requiring a special form of moral justification outside of the scope of agape. Special relations are important, and yet they are also dangerous distractions from disinterested, universal agape. In other words, the distributive problem is seen solely in terms of the free choices of the individual as she allocates her moral energies among people she enjoys and people she does not. The problem of exclusion from care and community is not located within social and economic structures but is transferred to the will of the moral agent; it is not seen in terms of distribution of the concrete goods required to foster another human being's survival and flourishing, nor is it understood in terms of the allocation of one's limited time and energy among potential recipients of the labor of care. In this book, I challenge such a formulation and argue that a Christian theology of love adequate to encompass dependent care relations must understand love (particularly the element of care provision) as interdependent with justice.

An analysis of Christian love in terms of dependency and care is made more urgent by the contemporary phenomenon of "global care chains." This term, coined by Arlie Russell Hochschild, refers to "a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring." About half of the world's 2,32 million international migrants are women, and of these, an increasing number are migrating on their own (not as a part of family units) in order to serve as child care workers, cleaners, home care aides, and health care workers, or in long-term care, both in domestic and institutional settings. Many of these women leave behind their own children or elderly parents in the care of other family members, neighbors, or even orphanages. In other words, care-giving labor is effectively extracted from many less-developed countries and imported to more-developed countries, in what Hochschild has dubbed a "global heart transplant." And some forms of needed care are simply not available at all: the migration of health care workers has significant detrimental impacts on a range of key health care indicators in sending countries, many of which have disproportionate health care needs.

This phenomenon confounds the paradigm used in so many recent Christian love theologies that

contrast universal, inclusive concern with particular loves or pit the distant stranger against concern for those near and dear to us. The globalization of the social organization of care means that the problem that vexed the moderns — the problem of our moral obligations to distant persons with whom we share humanity and interact in impersonal ways — has turned in on itself, as that distant person may now be living in our home and changing our children's diapers (or our own). We cannot discern the moral requirements of this situation in terms of abstract universals, but neither can we draw upon a communitarian focus on a shared vision of the good. This is because some participants in the relevant moral relationships will not be part of our community, but will be thousands of miles away, missing their mother, or caring for the children of our nanny or home health care worker. They will be living out ways of life that embody deep cultural, economic and political differences from our own, and yet are profoundly impacted by our own way of life. A contemporary Christian ethic of dependent care relations must include a conception of love that can encompass care, and must integrate Christian love with a conception of justice that is adequate to address this globalization of caregiving relations, this "global heart transplant."

There are multiple terms for (and some would say multiple forms of) Christian love: agape, eros, philia. In this book, I focus primarily on aspects of love most often captured by the word "agape," while recognizing that not every thinker means the same thing by this word. In general, though, agape connotes a steady other-regard that often comes at some cost to the self and is open to inclusion of all human persons (even if the individual Christian cannot personally show love to all human persons). Caregiving involves such other-regard and cost to the self, even when it is deeply rewarding. One of my primary concerns is the recognition of this sacrifice in caregiving relations, and the integration of justice with care such that this sacrifice, necessary to the continuation of human life itself, is not disproportionately assigned to certain groups to their severe detriment. I am also concerned that care be recognized more fully as moral work. Put differently, I focus more on love as the sort of active benevolence highlighted in the parable of the Good Samaritan than on love as the spiritual communion highlighted in the Johannine literature. Dependent care is also frequently rewarding, and

the love that emerges in dependent care relations can express the sort of deep, spiritual, affective, affirming, mutual, and erotic aspects that are highlighted by many Christian thinkers. I do not deny the importance of these dimensions of Christian love, but my primary focus is elsewhere. The justice I seek in dependent care relations can, in fact, make precisely this sort of rich, rewarding connection possible.

Unfolding the Argument

Chapter 2 addresses the obfuscation of dependency and care in Enlightenment and contemporary political theory. I begin by engaging the classical social contract political theories of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. These thinkers, whose primary theoretical opponents tried to ground political authority in relations of kinship and dependency rather than autonomy, responded by either erasing (Hobbes) or privatizing (Locke) dependency and caregiving relations. In each case, the avoidance of dependency leads to internal theoretical contradictions, but both these approaches to dependency continue to find expression in contemporary theories of justice. I then engage the most influential twentieth century political theorist, John Rawls, who combines aspects of this social contract tradition (including its obfuscation of dependency) with strong Kantian commitments. Rawls provides a fruitful conversation partner for several reasons. He brings together a strong emphasis on moral equality (through his strong commitment to Kantian respect for persons), an emphasis on equality as autonomy (which, again following Kant, serves as the grounding for moral equality in Rawls), and a commitment to equality of basic need fulfillment, through the incorporation of a social minimum to meet basic needs. Thus, Rawls would appear to offer the sort of integration of three forms of equality that I have argued any ethic of dependent care relations must accomplish.

However, to accomplish this, he also relies upon the fourth form of equality, equality of power: he excludes the deeply and permanently dependent (specifically, those with profound physical or cognitive disabilities) from the scope of justice. Such exclusion is not an option for a Christian ethic that takes seriously the inclusivity of neighbor-love commanded by Jesus. A Christian ethic must do some things differently to incorporate all persons. In particular, I begin to construct the argument that

a Christian (and thus inclusive) ethic of dependent care relations must incorporate both a more fully articulated account of the human goods that both politics and caring relations seek, and a more complex account of moral motives than Rawls uses to generate his principles of justice. Throughout this analysis, I draw upon, deepen, and occasionally critique recent work on Rawls by feminist and disability theorists.

In Chapter 3, I trace the deliberate exclusion of domestic and care work from the scope of the "economic" during the development of classical and neoclassical economics. This exclusion has resulted in enormous material injustice against unpaid caregivers on a global scale, injustice that should be of direct concern to Christian ethics. Beyond this, however, the exclusion of dependency and care from the realm of the economic required a highly reductionist and dualistic account of the motives involved in human economic activity, and thus leads to a distorted account of moral agency, one that cannot encompass the work of caregivers. Similarly, this exclusion of dependency and care allows economists to avoid any consideration of the goods sought through economics. I close this chapter with an analysis of the absurd implications that ensue when Gary Becker turns a theory that was built on the exclusion of the domestic sphere back onto the family. Constructively, this chapter argues that dependent care relations must be recognized as economic, to secure justice for caregivers; but the conception of economics incorporated into an ethic of dependent care relations cannot be the neoclassical version applied by Becker and others. It must be something closer to the "provisioning" conception adopted by feminist economists.

Taken together, Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate the interconnectedness, on a theoretical level, of the avoidance of any account of the goods to be sought in politics and economics, reductionist and bifurcated accounts of human motives, and the obfuscation of dependency and caregiving. These structural characteristics reappear again in the next two chapters, in which I examine the sacrificial and equal-regard traditions among Christian love theologies. Political theorists and economists avoid conceptions of the good to highlight and protect autonomy — autonomous choice both grounds political authority and drives production and distribution in the market. In contrast, within these

two theological traditions, pursuit of the good is framed as a matter of selfish grasping, something dangerous to true Christian love, which is seen as disinterested. As I shall argue, these theologies fall into incoherence once we ask about the place of relations of dependent care within them.

Chapter 4 engages the sacrificial love tradition, particularly post-Enlightenment sacrificial love thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Niebuhr, Nygren, Ramsey, and, more recently, Timothy Jackson and Colin Grant. Though this tradition has been subject to wide and varied feminist critique, any ethic of dependent care relations must incorporate an element of sacrifice, precisely because dependency and the need for care are embedded so thoroughly in human existence. Sometimes we are called to respond with our labor, concern, and material resources to persons who cannot reciprocate fully, or at all. However, the thinkers listed above treat sacrifice not as the pervasive moral reality that it is, but as an ideal sharply opposed to the realities of our daily, embodied existence. In so doing, they marginalize caregivers and their moral labor. Relatedly, in this tradition, the positive moral work of helping life to flourish is ignored. Thus the tradition requires a deeper and more nuanced feminist critique.

The sacrificial love tradition, and particularly Niebuhr, engages two foundational questions in Christian ethics that I have suggested must be addressed in any ethic of dependent care relations: the nature of our moral engagement with natural processes, which involve adaptation for survival and flourishing, cooperation, symbiosis, and competitive struggle; and the relation of love and justice. A dependent care ethic, I argue, must engage nature in a more complex way than simply idealizing transcendence of struggle and competition, and must incorporate a notion of justice that goes beyond Niebuhr's balance of competing interests. Contemporary thinkers Jackson and Grant each attempt to reclaim the sacrificial love tradition in conversation with contemporary critiques by feminist political theorists of dependency and care (Jackson) or by critics of the sharply separate autonomous self (Grant). These efforts are provocative, but ultimately cannot achieve their promise because both thinkers are so committed to showing the uniqueness and necessity of religious (specifically Christian) values in public

life that they must marginalize widespread caregiving activity, activity that is not the exclusive purview of Christians. In fact, in marginalizing caregivers, these thinkers sideline an important resource for challenging the self-interested, autonomous self and reclaiming the values they most want to promote. Christian sacrificial love theologies can engage productively with feminist political ethics of care, but this will require some fundamental modifications to the existing sacrificial tradition. I close the chapter with constructive insights about how sacrifice must be framed within a Christian ethic of dependent care relations.

In Chapter 5, I engage with Gene Outka's influential conception of agape as "equal regard," a regard for others that is not based on any particular characteristics that might render the object of love interesting or attractive to us. Because it is unrelated to the particularity of the other, agape is unalterable, claims Outka. He constructs his conception of agape by analyzing existing treatments of Christian love through the lens of a school of analytic philosophy that has been very effectively critiqued by feminist philosophers for obscuring dependency and caregiving relations. But this critique has not yet been applied to Outka himself. The fierce debate that Outka sparked over the relationship between agape as "equal regard" and so-called "special relations" bore a striking resemblance to the debate over "justice" and "care" moral orientations sparked by Carol Gilligan within feminist ethics, but the latter conversation has progressed beyond its gendered beginnings and primary focus on the ethical orientation of the individual moral agent. Today feminist political theorists are producing important work theorizing the appropriate social structures to support caregiving relations, including the ways in which such structures must evolve in light of the globalization of the social organization of care. In contrast, the conversation in Christian ethics got stuck; it could not transcend the "moral boundaries" (Joan Tronto) that obscure care in the analytic philosophy on which Outka draws.

Chapters 2 through 5 outline bodies of thought in which the modern emphasis on equality and autonomy have worked to obscure dependency and devalue caregiving. In Chapter 6, I turn to contemporary reclamations of a premodern tradition: the Thomistic understanding of Christian

love and its ordering. Stephen Pope, Jean Porter, and others have effectively articulated many of the strengths of this tradition: it offers a picture of finite human persons embedded in a web of social relations of giving and receiving; it harnesses our natural inclinations to do more good for those most closely tied to us. To this, I add that the Thomistic tradition conceives of us as loving others as good for their own sakes, in a way that both calls out sacrifice from us and adds goodness to our own lives. The Thomistic virtue tradition offers better tools than either sacrificial or equal-regard theologies for describing and assessing the complex, nuanced moral agency exercised within particular dependent care relations. The Thomistic account of prudence, in particular, has parallels to many feminist accounts of good care as comprised of fine-grained judgments, careful attention, and emotional sensitivity. Finally, the Thomistic tradition can draw upon a positive account of the goods that care relations seek to instantiate — a rich account of what is due to vulnerable human beings.

Things are more complicated, however, when we turn to the allocation of responsibility for care — what Thomas labels the "order of love." Here, some of the foundational assumptions of the Thomistic tradition, assumptions deeply intertwined with the European medieval social order and medieval scientific frameworks, must be challenged. The Thomistic order of love tradition is not sufficient, in a globalized context that is pervaded by exploitation, inequality, and staggering levels of unmet human need, to ground an ethic of love and inclusive justice for dependent care relations. Thus the retrievable aspects of the Thomistic tradition must be integrated with a conception of justice adequate to the contemporary context, in which care itself has become a global commodity. Otherwise, an ethic based in the Thomistic order of love will only reinforce exclusionary structures of injustice.

Accordingly, in Chapter 7, drawing on discussions in previous chapters, I outline several characteristics needed in any conception of justice adequate to address the contemporary global social organization of care. Such a conception must articulate the prerequisites of human flourishing — the human goods — that caregiving relations should seek to fulfill. It is these prerequisites that must be distributed in such a way that all persons,

including dependents and caregivers, can flourish. A conception of justice that can become part of a Christian ethic of dependent care relations must recognize care as economic. Because so much of the care economy exists outside the market, because care involves various complex local, national, and international relationships and practices, and because caregivers are so vulnerable to exploitation, this ethic of justice must articulate a juridical role for the state and for international regulatory and governing organizations. Finally, an account of justice adequate to a Christian ethic of dependent care relations must ensure that those engaged in care processes can critically and continuously assess care practices and the allocation of responsibility for care. Such processes must amplify the voice of marginalized persons, who so often require the most care and/or provide the most demanding care.

Given these parameters, in my final chapter, I explore resources that might contribute to such an account of justice, including Catholic social thought, feminist retrievals of Thomistic natural law ethics, secular feminist political ethics of care, and feminist dependency-based theories of justice. Each of these resources has strengths and limitations for our purposes, but together they may provide the building blocks to move forward. Finally, I explore recent work in disability studies and feminist philosophy on vulnerability, to show that secular feminist philosophy encounters difficulty when trying to ground an inclusive ethic that acknowledges dependency. I suggest that the Christian theological tradition may offer resources for grounding our equality in dependency more effectively than secular feminist ethics can do. To illustrate this possibility, I turn to a final resource, Kathryn Tanner's notion of "non-contrastive transcendence" and its use to affirm a primordial equality based in our relationship to God. <>

[How the Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age](#) by Jonathan Leeman [Thomas Nelson, 9781400207640]

How can we move forward amid such political strife and cultural contention?

We live in a time of division. It shows up not just between political parties and ethnic groups and churches but also inside of them. As Christians, we've felt pushed to the outskirts of national public

life, yet even then we are divided about how to respond. Some want to strengthen the evangelical voting bloc. Others focus on social-justice causes, and still others would abandon the public square altogether. What do we do when brothers and sisters in Christ sit next to each other in the pews but feel divided and angry? Is there a way forward?

In [How the Nations Rage](#), political theology scholar and pastor Jonathan Leeman challenges Christians from across the spectrum to hit the restart button. First, we shift our focus from redeeming the nation to living as a redeemed nation. Second, we take the lessons learned inside the church into our public engagement outside of it by loving our neighbors and seeking justice. When we identify with Christ more than a political party or social grouping, we avoid the false allure of building heaven on earth and return to the church's unchanging political task: to represent a heavenly and future kingdom now. It's only when we realize that the life of our churches now is the hope of the nation for tomorrow that we become the salt and light Jesus calls us to be.

Jonathan Leeman is the editorial director at 9Marks, a ministry that helps church leaders build healthy churches. He teaches theology at several seminaries and has written a number of books on the church. He is also a research fellow with the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. He has degrees in political science and English, a master of science in political theory, a master of divinity, and a doctorate in political theology. Jonathan served for years as an elder at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, but has since left to plant a nearby church. He lives in the DC area with his wife and four daughters.

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Excerpt:

A Nation Raging, a Church Unchanging

I am writing this late in the evening on July 4. My daughters are in bed. The sizzle and crackle of fireworks are over. But the music from PBS's coverage of the concert outside the US Capitol building still rings in my ears. The show combined patriotic music, words from well-known American heroes, and photos of iconic American images—the Statue of Liberty, the Lincoln Monument, the Grand Canyon, the Golden Gate Bridge, and so on.

O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain.

I feel a swell of emotion. Independence Day, for me, brings with it a sense of nostalgia, almost like a birthday does. A birthday evokes memories of childhood. July Fourth evokes memories of, well, how do you describe it? Memories of America? What it is, what it represents, what we want it to be.

I don't recall when I first became conscious of my affection for the United States. Maybe it was amid the glint of sparklers on the Second, our outward turn must account for large-scale realities. For some Christians this might mean taking a job or using vacation time to combat broader "headline grabbing" injustices. I think of Clare from my own church who took a year after college to move to Guatemala to do data monitoring and evaluations on child sexual assault. I think of Thomasine, also from my church, who moved to Ghana for a couple of years to fight slavery in the fishing industry. Chesed, a next-door neighbor and close family friend, has helped facilitate connections between refugees from Afghanistan and members of our church. Dave, a friend of mine from another church, uses his vacations to fly to Thailand and work against the sex-trafficking industry there. He's done this seven years in a row.

Accounting for larger-scale realities more commonly means examining where you live, work, or go to church and asking yourself if there's anything you can do to address long-term entrenched patterns or policies that cause some groups to be overlooked or disenfranchised. Drawing from the previous examples of implicit bias, a real estate agent might consider how to address the widespread pattern of treating minority and majority clients differently. Doctors might investigate why Asian Americans receive less cancer referrals even if they contract cancer at a higher rate. Law enforcement officers or teachers might look for ways to address such biases in their work. My friend Matt is a partner at a DC firm. He was asked to join the diversity committee. The firm wanted to promote diversity by making a big deal of Martin Luther King Day. That's fine. But much more crucial, Matt proposed, is for the partners to start looking for strong minority associates, taking them under their wing, and grooming them toward partnership. It's a long-term solution, but it will build something more solid that lasts. It doesn't simply paint the veneer of reconciliation.

As we continue to pursue a Christian vision for justice, we must address political policies and projects. Most Christians already have a vision for this, and we've talked about it in earlier chapters. Folks on the Right tend to work against issues like abortion. Folks on the Left tend to work against racial matters. It's deeply frustrating to me, as I said in the introduction, that Satan has managed to so successfully divide Christians and churches, particularly along ethnic lines, through our differently weighted justice burdens. The first step to restoring trust is reclaiming our joint membership in the gospel. The second is to drop the defensiveness and better listen to one another. Imagine if majority and minority saints began to work together here? Might the saints not push back the kingdom of darkness a pace or two? In my estimate, the greater responsibility to listen, learn, and move in belongs to the majority. But let every saint heed the call of the gospel to unity, love, and justice.

I appreciate the example of Republican Senator Tim Scott working together with Democrat Senator Cory Booker to stimulate jobs for younger Americans by offering tax credits to employers who offer apprenticeships for younger job

applicants. They proposed paying for this program by curtailing the printing of government publications that are already available online. And I'm quite sure the world would benefit from fewer government publications! They have also partnered together to work on issues surrounding mass incarceration.

I know little to nothing about these two men otherwise, but I do pray the saints would follow that kind of bipartisan example. And I rejoice that many have already begun.

I confess, I'm not immediately optimistic about America's race problem, as well as its other points of division. We keep reasserting our shared beliefs in rights, equality, and liberty. But hiding inside of those words are different gods with their different views of justice. The principles that unite America, ironically, divide it.

And that's the bigger issue here. Our challenges on race are just one illustration of it. Equality, liberty, and individual rights are good gifts from God. But apart from God they lack the ballast to keep a nation united. There is no appeal to what's right and the Maker of right. Therefore, the nation rages against the Lord, just like every other nation since the nativity of nations.

Can we force the nation to adopt our definition of right in the public square? No, of course not. But that doesn't mean we should stop speaking up for it and living by it. Our political success, remember, depends on faithfulness, not results.

I do have hope and trust in the work of Christ and his Spirit in the church. Our churches have the solution: gospel love and gospel justice. One leads to the other. In love, God the just became God the justifier. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). In so doing he removed the barrier between us and God, and then the barrier between us and one another. Our fate and hope and life in no way hangs on the favor of the nations.

Gospel love and gospel justice together untangle knots, neutralize acids, and dissolve the most intractable clogs. Love alone will cause us to choose justice, to beat our swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. To turn the other cheek and walk the extra mile.

Shouldn't our churches be the first places on the planet where we witness these things? Where, as I said in chapter 1, we achieve and cherish Lincoln's just and lasting peace? We should live this way inside. We should turn to do the same outside. The church's work, finally, is in no way contingent on the favor of the nation toward Christianity. We might be popular or unpopular. But our political task is the same: love your neighbor, share the gospel, do justice.

Why the Battle Might Get Worse, but Our Political Hopes Can Remain Unchanged, Untroubled, Untouched

I went to a Washington Nationals baseball game yesterday with my wife and kids. We had a great time: pretzels, cheese fries, cotton candy, lemonade. No one got a hot dog though.

During the seventh-inning stretch a woman sang "God Bless America." People stood. Some removed their hats.

I have to admit, that song feels a little strange to me. Which God? What kind of blessing? It's sort of like the words "In God we trust" on our dollar bills. Are we talking about the same God? And trust how?

I see advantages and disadvantages to those kinds of civic expressions of belief and trust in God. On the one hand, it's the church's job to pronounce the name of the Almighty. Also, such civic expressions can feel like hypocrisy.

On the other hand, a nation and its rulers should remind them-selves often that they will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive what is due for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10). The psalmist warned:

Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the
way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Ps.
2:10-12)

Notice to whom these lines are addressed: the kings and rulers of all nations, including ours. And as voters, aren't we those rulers? Perhaps it's good

that the faintest glimmers of this warning show up every time someone looks at a dollar bill or hears that song.

Love of Nation

I do want God to bless America, land that I love. I want him to bless it with peace and justice. I want the nation to know the blessing that comes to citizens and leaders who take refuge in him, as the final line of the psalm says.

Some of my more globally minded friends wonder if it's okay to love your country. As with many forms of love, there's healthy and unhealthy versions of love for country.

I love America analogously to how I love my own church. I don't love my church to the exclusion of other churches. All our churches share one gospel and one God. We belong to one family. We're on the same team. Nonetheless, it's the members of my own church whose names I know, whose children I watch in the nursery, whose classes I teach, whose lives I'm a part of. My love for all God's people is exercised there, among them, even with all our shortcomings and sin.

It should be the same with our love for our nation. We should not love it to the exclusion of other nations. We all share one God and belong to one common, God-imaging humanity. God has determined the periods and the boundaries of America and every other nation so that people may find their way to him (Acts 17:26-27). Nonetheless, it's the citizens and statues and buildings and holidays and artists and landscapes and baseball games and cheese fries and hospital delivery rooms of our nation whose names we know. Our love for humanity should be exercised there, among them, even with all our shortcomings and sin.

Hope for the Nation

None of us knows what's ahead for the nation. The battle might temporarily grow fiercer. It might temporarily improve. We do know the nation will rage against our God and against his Anointed. The Anointed One, his son Jesus, promised that they will do this until he returns.

Yet the political hopes of the church can remain unchanged, untroubled, untouched. After all, our life is a supernatural life, and our work is a supernatural work, my pastor has said. We cannot raise the dead or give sight to the blind. That was

true in the 1790s and the 1950s, and it's true today. Our work therefore is no harder or easier than it's ever been. It has always depended entirely on God.

We should not be naïve about the forces of darkness arrayed against us. But fear and withdrawal make no sense for the church. We press on as we always have.

Yet, if I'm going to have any hope for the nation, I cannot place it in the nation. I will place it in healthy churches.

People often extol the genius of the American founders and the wisdom of the Constitution. And let's give honor where honor is due. Unless you count the tiny republic of San Marino whose documents apparently go back to 1600, America possesses the oldest written constitution in the world. It has needed some fixing along the way, particularly after the Civil War. But it's generally proven more durable than anything found in the old and great nations of Russia, China, Germany, Egypt, or elsewhere. Not only that, America has arguably proven to be among the most prosperous, strong, and free nations in history.

Yet it seems to me we should give as much credit to the childhood pastors and Christian parents of the American founders as to the men themselves. Nearly every founder was weaned on the moral virtues of Christianity, even if many of them eventually rejected its doctrines. They inconsistently applied the lessons, but they were taught to regard human beings as created in God's image, each person worthy of dignity and respect. They inherited an understanding of rights and the conscience and equality from a faith that, yes, they variously kept at arm's length. They took the flowers, even if they cut them from the roots.

God's common grace grants many a nation better than it deserves, but I have little confidence that America will long remain strong, prosperous, and free without any concept of God's righteousness and justice somewhere in the background. That's not because I believe in a civil prosperity gospel: obey God and the nation will be blessed as his chosen people. It's because I believe the way of God's righteousness and justice is the way of wisdom. And prosperity and flourishing ordinarily come to the wise. The nation can be strong apart from God's righteousness, like a totalitarian state is strong. Or

it can be "free," in some impoverished and mangy sense of that word, like a stray dog is free. But it won't be both.

Which brings me back to healthy churches. If there is hope for the nation, it's through the witness and work of churches. Our congregations have the opportunity to live transformed lives as a transformed culture through a transformed politics in their own fellowships right now—all for God's glory and our neighbors' good. And we will become such heavenly outposts when we focus first not on the public square, but on preaching the Word and making disciples. Together those disciples must grow up to maturity, into Christ, as each part does its work (Eph. 4:13-16). The resonant effects in the home, the marketplace, the public square, and the rest of life then follow.

God does not intend to display his own justice and righteousness and wisdom through the wise, noble, and powerful things of this world, but through the foolish, weak, and despised things. He means to magnify himself not primarily through the US Congress, the New York Times editorial page, or Ivy League philosophy departments, but through Brother Bob, Sister Sue, and Deacon Darnell down at Bumblestew Baptist.

Oh, nations of the earth, watch those three gathered in Jesus' name to see the way of God's justice and mercy. They are God's salt and light for you. Do you sense something distinct in them? See something bright? They are far from perfect, to be sure. But their King is perfect. And their lives together should offer you the first taste of his kingdom. <>

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Appendix: John Paul II and the authorship of *Gaudium et Spes* 22 §1 and 24 §3

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