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**Faith and Fighting:
Warfare and Its
Theological and
Religious Contours**



FACULTY OF
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Each issue divides contributions into two categories: i) those which respond to the special theme of that issue, invited in each edition's Call for Papers; ii) those which come under the general scope of the journal.

As an affiliate of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford, the scope of the journal is defined by the breadth of research undertaken by fellows and postgraduate students of the faculty. As such, articles address questions pertinent to the critical study of theology and religion from a variety of disciplines and methodologies, including (but not limited to): biblical studies, religious ethics, historical and systematic theology, ecclesiastical history, philosophical theology, science and religion, and the study of religion—including sociological, anthropological, and psychological approaches. The journal also publishes critical book reviews, media reviews, and featured articles.

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Editorial Introduction

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Welcome to the fourth volume of the *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* (JOGTS)! This issue's theme is "Faith and Fighting: Warfare and Its Theological and Religious Contours." In Michaelmas 2022, the JOGTS Editorial Board met to discuss prospective themes and decided on "Faith and Fighting" as an especially timely one. But what does this theme entail? Well, to give some idea, whether one considers the war-torn ancient Near East, the military conquests waged by Alexander the Great, the two World Wars, or the contemporary conflicts in Europe and other regions around the world, warfare seems an enduring element in human relations, governance, and culture. If often ignored or otherwise treated as ancillary to political and economic analyses, the theological and religious factors influencing, underlying, or resulting from warfare are nevertheless immeasurably important areas of inquiry. For example, studying church doctrine, religious movements, and specific beliefs about doctrinal topics such as immanence, transcendence, eternity, reincarnation, the afterlife, and immortality can shed valuable light upon the complex sociocultural and ideological reasons and dynamics giving rise to and shaping warfare. So, too, carefully studying theologians and religious scholars who have lived through war may disclose the ways in which thinkers past and present have used theological, philosophical, and religious resources to address the hellish realities in which they find themselves. In various ways, the contents comprising this fourth volume of JOGTS unearth and examine these types of questions and topics to thus explore the broad theme of "Faith and Fighting."

Of note, the issue specifically comprises a featured article, two full-length interviews, a sermon, and two book reviews.



Sarah Apetrei eloquently examines “editions and translations of mystical texts by Catholics at a time of aggressive anti-popish public discourse, the late Elizabethan and early Stuart periods” and considers “the significance of the military imagery used in this ‘peaceful war.’” In her analysis, Dr Apetrei draws attention to the fact that, though Catholic mysticism could and commonly was weaponised by its readers toward the end of formulating various apologetic arguments, “there was also an increasingly conscious intention among those promoting mystical spirituality [during the English Counter-Reformation of the 1540s through 1640s] to abstain from...religious division and sterile controversy,” including controversy that would incite religious and sectarian violence.

In an insightful and wide-ranging interview, Canon Professor Michael Snape dives deep to give us the results of his extensive scholarship and historical work on the relationship between religion and warfare, especially as manifest in his latest work, *A Church Militant: Anglicans and the Armed Forces from Queen Victoria to the Vietnam War* (Oxford University Press, 2022). One lamenting result noted in the interview, and a key realisation of Professor Snape’s research, is that, with respect to the relationship between the church and the armed forces, “religious factors are too often readily eliminated or filtered out of our analysis of contemporary complexities. We are locked in a Western paradigm of secularisation: religion is becoming more redundant, more marginal.” Professor Snape adds, “[t]here has to be a far more intelligent appraisal and understanding of the fact that where the West has led, the rest of the world will not necessarily follow—arguably in terms of perspectives on religion...[a] more complex, nuanced, and full understanding [of] the role of religion as a driving factor within conflicts, as well as a sustaining factor within conflict, must be grasped within the public sphere.”

Hailing from Zolotonosha, Ukraine, in a sermon given at the University Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford on 26 March 2023, Professor Cyril Hovorun provides a critical examination of Vladimir Putin and Russian aggression in the war in Ukraine since its escalation in February 2022. Without giving any aspect of his astute homily away, Professor Hovorun cogently critiques Putin, comparing him to his role model, Joseph Stalin, yet with far less theological competence and insight.

Mark G. Pomar provides an interview in which he discusses his vast experiences in “Cold War Radio” in multiple roles including Assistant Director of Russian Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty during the 1980s and 90s. Professor Pomar shares the way in which the Cold War was waged on the radio airwaves and both superpowers navigated the tremendously rich and complex discourse and propaganda of religion and irreligion as well as the war of ideas and ideals them.

The fourth instalment of JOGTS would not have been possible without the support of multiple individuals. First, Amelia (Mimi) Nicholson, technologist-extraordinaire and creative genius, thank you for your ongoing support and expertise in audio- and video-editing and for ensuring JOGTS continues to have a resounding digital presence. Second, Victoria Phillips, thank you for your enthusiasm and willingness to help in tasks far too numerous and diverse to count. Third, Tom

Topel, thank you for being our steadfast and reliable Reviews Editor. Fourth, thank you to the entire JOGTS Editorial Board and the assembly of peer reviewers near and far for your generous commitment of time and energy. Finally, thank you to the Advisory Board for your ongoing support and guidance. An especial thanks goes to Dr Sarah Apetrei, the Faculty in general and JOGTS in particular will undoubtedly miss you as our Director of Graduate Studies but we are comforted to know that you will not be going too far and we wish you all the very best as you undertake your new role at Campion Hall.

And, with that, all that remains is for me to wish the incoming Co-Editors, Elizabeth Clayton and Victoria Phillips, alongside the Editorial Board the very best venturing out into 2023–2024!

“Not by force of Armes”: Mysticism and Confessional Conflict in the English Counter-Reformation

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Religious reform in western Europe in the early modern period has tended to be viewed against the backdrop of the conflicts and controversies which afflicted different territories in the period between the 1540s and 1640s, as an outworking of confessional change. The “religion” of early modern people – an extraordinarily loose category – is often accessed through the polemic, propaganda, and other political or controversial genres which contributed to inter-confessional hostilities. There is a rich seam of recent research, however, dedicated to exploring early modern religion not in terms of conflict or of top-down, state-led processes of “confessionalization”, but in terms of devotional practice, domestic piety, local negotiation, and cooperation across confessional lines. As a recent review article put it, “Contrary to widely held notions of the age as relentlessly divisive, doctrinal differences did not always structure religious (or other) interactions. Whereas irenicism as a theological strand has long been celebrated for its pursuit of an elusive interconfessional peace, scholars within and beyond the mold of confessionalization have started to explore a whole range of everyday practices” which supported a more irenical approach.¹ Among other strategies for managing difference, some research has illustrated how, in confessionally vexed contexts: “devotional texts actively pursued a vision of inclusive Christianity”.² In connection with the English Reformation, several studies have given examples of the confessional ambiguity of devotional writing, as it drew on the late-medieval spiritual resources which had

¹ Helmut Puff, “Belief in the Reformation Era: Reflections on the State of Confessionalization”, in *Central European History*, 51:1 (2018), 48.

² Ibid., with reference to the work of Ute Lotz-Heumann and Matthias Pohlig, in “Confessionalization and Literature in the Empire, 1555-1700”, in *Central European History*, 40:1 (2007), 35-61.



provided inspiration for both Catholic and Protestant reform.³ In this article, I look at editions and translations of mystical texts by Catholics at a time of aggressive anti-popish public discourse, the late Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, and consider the significance of the military imagery used in this “peaceful war”. While it is undoubtedly the case that Catholic mysticism could be weaponized by its editors as part of an arsenal of apologetic instruments, there was also an increasingly conscious intention among those promoting mystical spirituality to abstain from, or at least navigate a way through, religious division and sterile controversy. The cost of such an ambition was institutional suspicion.

Mystical Translations and Confessional Difference

The effort to define and disseminate an authoritative corpus of mystical texts as an engine of reform and defence against heresy had its origins in the crisis of the early sixteenth century. From the beginnings of the Reformation, the publication of mystical works aimed at both spiritual renewal and at resistance to evangelical dissent. Famously, the Carthusian house of St Barbara in Cologne became a hub of printing activity from the mid-1520s, producing a large number of original mystical works alongside influential editions of the Rhineland mystics: Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Harp. The spiritual theology of the Carthusians, and the devotional writers they patronised, upheld the “freedom of the will, the necessity of self-denial and the possibility of union with God”, and was intended to stand as a powerful bulwark against Lutheran teachings.⁴ Mystical theology, particularly that of the fifteenth-century devotional writer and scholastic theologian Denys the Carthusian, was deployed by the Cologne Charterhouse against the Anabaptists of Münster.⁵ The Cologne project found an echo, if not an exact parallel, in the publishing activities of English Catholic reformers, especially in their works of translation. The focus of the translators was on disseminating contemporary devotional writings – especially those which emerged from the Spanish “golden age”. As Alexandra Walsham has observed, these “ostensibly apolitical works of devotion”, professing to cultivate “repentance and piety” rather than foment controversy, could be seen as “subtle and sophisticated exercises in sect formation.”⁶ Walsham suggests that, in large part thanks to this print campaign, “the piety of recusant households was primarily inward-looking and devotional in tone, a religion perhaps rooted more in prayers and self-regulated programmes

³ See, for instance, Max von Habsburg, *Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425-1650: From Late Medieval Classic to Early Modern Bestseller* (London: Routledge, 2011); Miriam Castillo, “Catholic Translation and Protestant Translation: The Reception of Luis de Granada’s Devotional Prose in Early Modern England”, in *Translation and Literature* (2017), 26/2, pp. 145-61.

⁴ Carlos Eire, “Early modern Catholic piety in translation”, in Peter Burke and R. Po-chi Hsia eds., *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, 91.

⁵ See Sigrun Haude, *In the Shadow of “Savage Wolves”: Anabaptist Münster and the German Reformation During the 1530s* (Boston, MA: Humanities Press, 2000), 60-69.

⁶ Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), 257-261.

of spiritual exercise than in sacramental observances”.⁷ The circulation of books focused on the inner life of the faith helped to nurture a collective identity among dispersed and isolated British Catholics, which could be maintained in the absence of common acts of worship.

In many cases, these texts seem to have been intended to strengthen the resolve of those loyal to Rome by confronting Protestant piety and spiritual discipline directly, especially those described as “Puritans” in the English Church, and to discredit the spirituality of Protestants as barren and fraudulent. Mysticism was made central to the reforming (and counter-reforming) enterprise of British Catholics claiming the authenticating stamp of the Holy Spirit. It would be distorting to characterise the Catholic promotion of spiritual renewal as simply defensive and reactionary, part of the fallout of confessional politics alongside printed polemics. To argue that many Catholic activists regarded spiritually edifying literature as their best weapon against the Protestants is not to suggest that their campaign was cynical or merely tactical. Their professed aim was to deepen the orthodox spirituality of the Catholic faithful and to effect true conversion of the heart; to bring about the kind of “reformation” pioneered by Spanish mystics in their own age. Naturally enough, they regarded Protestant spirituality – the fruit of heresy and schism, as they saw it – as seriously deficient. The Jesuit missionary Robert Parsons, hardly an impartial commentator, complained in 1582 of “the greate want of spirituall bookes in Englande, for the direction of men to pietie and devotion”.⁸ Such a dearth of practical resources for the spiritual life provided fertile ground for mission and engagement; more fertile, arguably, than the field of theological disputation. Richard Hopkins, the translator and editor of several works by Luis de Granada, explained his publishing activity in terms of spiritual reformation, insisting that:

more spirituall profite wolde undoutedlie ensewe thereby to the gayninge of Christian sowles in our countrie from Schisme, and Heresie, and from all sinne, and iniquitie, than by bookes that treate of controversies in Religion: wich (as experience hath nowe plaineleie tried) doe nothinge so well dispose the common peoples myndes to the feare, love and service of almightie God, as bookes treatinge of devotion, and howe to leade a vertuous life doe.⁹

Elsewhere, Hopkins expressed his view that “the right assured way to reforme Christendome, beinge at this present so farre corrupted in every Countrey, is not by force of Armes, nor by terror, & constraint of greivous penal lawes, forfeitures, confiscations, & executions with terrible deaths: because the Christian Commonwealth in such a general corruption of al estats, it cannot by any other means be dewlie reformed, mainteyned, and preserved, but by such as it was at the first founded, and increased.” The peaceful discipline of St Benedict, St Bernard, St Dominic, and

⁷ Ibid., 281.

⁸ Robert Parsons, *The first booke of the Christian exercise appertayning to resolution* (s.l., 1582), 1.

⁹ Richard Hopkins, dedicatory letter in Luis de Granada, *Of prayer, and meditation* (s.l., 1582), 6-7.

St Francis provided the best guide to the “godlie order of proceeding for Reformation of the Christian State”.¹⁰ Hopkins did not, however, entirely discard a controversial or polemical tone. His printed translations provided a platform to rail against “this newe Calvinistical pretended reformed Religion” with its licentious doctrine of justification leading whole nations into error in the evil latter days, and especially those agents of Satan, the Puritans.¹¹

English editions of Teresa of Avila’s “Life” similarly emphasised the value of such spiritual works in challenging heresy. Her translators described her achievements as a reformer in terms of an apocalyptic “miracle” given by God at a time of general apostasy and cosmic crisis as Satan’s forces gathered strength. A 1611 translation, thought to be the work of the English Jesuit Michael Walpole, suggested that her claims to have been gifted with miraculous revelation were confirmed rather than undermined by her gender.¹²

For since it belongeth not to women to teach, but to be taught, as S. Paul writeth it presently appeareth a new wonder, that a weak woman should be so couragious, as to undertake so great an affayre, and so wise & of such efficacy, that she should bring it to passe, and robbe the hearts of those, who treated with her, to geve them to God, and draw so many after her, to all that which sense abhorreth. In which, so farre as I can judge, God vouchsafed in this time, when the devil seemeth to triumph in the multitude of infidels, which follow him, & in the pertinacy of so many hereticall people, which take his part, & in the many vices of the faithfull, which are on his syde, for his greater mockery and contempt, to set before him not a valyant man armed with learning, but a poor & solitary woman, who should defy him, and lift up a banner against him, and publikely gather souldiours, which should overcome, vanquish, and beat him down, and he vouchsafed without doubt for the greater demonstration of his power in this age, where so many thousands of men, some with their erring wittes, & others with their wicked lives impugne his kingdome, that a woman should enlighten the understandings, and order the customes of many, which every day encrease to repayre these ruines.¹³

The trope of a poor, pious mystic woman armed with her sanctity, confronting and overcoming the “erring wittes” of an apostate age, is strikingly militaristic. In this instance, the military imagery is deliberately counterintuitive and illustrates the futility of the worldly strategies of actual force or violence, in contrast to the spiritual warfare which would effect true reformation. That “a weak

¹⁰ Richard Hopkins, “The Translatours Dedicatory Epistle”, in Luis de Granada, *A memoriall of a Christian life* (Rouen, 1586), 4-5.

¹¹ Hopkins, *Of prayer, and meditation*, 16.

¹² Some scholars have identified “W.M.” as the Irish Jesuit William Malone; the attribution remains uncertain.

¹³ W.M., “The Epistle Dedicatorie”, in Teresa of Avila, *The lyf of the mother Teresa of Jesus* (Antwerp, 1611), §2v-3r.

woman” should wield such authority authenticated the divine source of her empowerment. Teresa’s editor rejoiced that in the present darkness, “the Religious women shine like greater lights among the smaller starres; for as a blessed woman began the reformation, so the women thereof, seem in all to have the preheminance”.¹⁴ Despite this affirmation of Teresa’s authenticity, the editor was keenly aware that mystical visions “above ordinary discourse” were regarded with suspicion. He anticipated that some would object that “revelations are doubtfull”, and that “the interiour conversation of the soul with God, is a very spirituall busynesse, and of few, and that the publishing of it to all, may be an occasion of danger, in which verely they are deceyved”.¹⁵

A later translation of Teresa’s spiritual autobiography, *The Flaming Hart* by Sir Tobie Matthew (1642), reproduced verbatim some passages from the earlier English edition, and echoed the view that “this Blessed Woeman was stirred-up by God’s holie Spirit, in this Age of ours, for the redresse of our moderne, great disorders”, and “that his Divine Majestie had a minde to be most particularly served, and glorified by it”. It was a miracle of the Spirit that a woman was raised up “to passe through so manie impediments, and to winne the Prize” in these “present, most depraved times”.¹⁶ Produced in the period after Teresa’s canonisation in 1622, Matthew admits no reference to the doubtful status of visions, and adds hagiographical flourishes, describing Teresa as a spiritual “Gyantesse” comparable in stature to Augustine; he even ventures to juxtapose Teresa’s revelations with those of St John, “which are incomparably more repugnant, both to reason and even to Common sense, then anie thing, which is related heer.”¹⁷ As Roy Norton has recently noted, Matthew’s Teresa spoke with quite a different voice from the Teresa of the Spanish *Vida*. Whereas in the Spanish she was hesitant or tentative about interpreting her own visions, in the English she was categorical and forthright; Matthew made her speak in a voice “more ordered, learned, and magisterial than the original”; a voice perhaps even “defeminized”.¹⁸ The English Teresa was the strident mouthpiece of Catholic self-assertion at a time of religious crisis.

Sir Tobie Matthew had been waging a peaceful battle with Protestants over three decades, in the form of a steady flow of translations of saints’ lives and spiritual works. His contribution to the translation campaign of the English Counter-Reformation illustrates the extent to which contemporary mystical literature was conscripted as an arm of apologetic. Matthew, the son of a senior Elizabethan churchman of the same name, was probably converted by Robert Parsons, among others, during a visit to Rome in 1605-7; he was subsequently ordained priest in the Roman

¹⁴ Ibid., §**1r.

¹⁵ Ibid., §**3r-**3v

¹⁶ Tobie Matthew, “Preface of the translatour, to the Christian, and civil reader”, in *The flaming hart, or the life of the glorious S. Teresa* (Antwerp, 1642), §***6r-v.

¹⁷ Ibid., §**8v.

¹⁸ Roy Norton, “Sir Tobie Matthew’s *Flaming Hart*: Translating St Teresa for the English Catholic Exiles”, in *Translation and Literature* (2018), 27/1, pp. 11-12, 23.

Church in 1614 by Cardinal Bellarmine. Remarkably, despite two periods of exile during James I's reign, he was knighted in October 1623 for his assistance in the negotiations for the doomed Spanish match.¹⁹ Though he continually protested his loyalty to the English king, Matthew's published works were uncompromising in their hostility towards Protestant theology and spirituality. This is no less true of his editions of contemporary Spanish and Italian spiritual biographies and mystical writings (notably the spiritual manuals of Alphonso Rodriguez) than it is of his more openly apologetic works. His edition of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's *Vita* was the occasion for a strong defence of penance against the Protestant libertines, and, according to a contemporary, circulated widely and bore "great fruit" among English Catholics.²⁰ Matthew also produced a new edition of Augustine's *Confessions*, the blueprint for spiritual autobiography in the early modern world, which was a defiant answer to Thomas Rogers' Reformed versions of Pseudo-Augustine.²¹ It included an extensive preface insistently repudiating the adoption of Augustine as "the patron of any Calvinisticall opinion against the Catholikes".²² In an original devotional treatise *Of the love of our only Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ* (1622), Matthew addressed both Catholic and Protestant readers, claiming that:

this Treatise is not intended, for the setting of the truth of the Catholike faith, and to convince them of error, who impugn it; but only to inflame the hart of the true Christian to heate of love, vpon those reasons and motives, which are already ministered, by the light of faith to our soules. That other taske, hath bene performed by multitudes of our learned Authors, wherof the world is full.²³

Nonetheless, Matthew could not refrain from frequent polemical asides aimed at "sectaries" and "Calvinists".

The apologetic and polemic framing of the translations and devotional manuals could not quite mark the stark boundary between Protestant and Catholic spirituality which their editors sought to establish. The works of Teresa of Avila were not favoured by Protestant readers, perhaps because of their female authorship but also their visionary content, in contrast to the more practical spiritual instruction available from the Jesuits. Robert Parsons' own defining contribution to the print campaign, the *Book of Christian Exercise or Christian Directory*, distributed from his

¹⁹ On Tobie Matthew, see James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 110-111.

²⁰ See Clare Copeland, *Maria Maddalena De' Pazzi: The Making of a Counter-Reformation Saint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 101.

²¹ On Rogers' editions of Pseudo-Augustine, see Julia Staykova, "Pseudo-Augustine and Religious Controversy in Early Modern England" in Karla Pollmann and Meredith Gill eds., *Augustine Beyond the Book: Intermediality, Transmediality, and Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 147-166.

²² Tobie Matthew, "The Preface to the Reader" in Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions of the incomparable doctour S. Augustine*, trans. Tobie Matthew (Saint-Omer, 1620), 79.

²³ Tobie Matthew, *Of the love of our only Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ* (1622), 294.

clandestine press at Stonor Park, was a powerful exhortation to inward reformation or “resolution”: the earnest intention of the heart to serve God. It was designed to preface a book of spiritual instruction by the Italian Jesuit Gaspar de Loarte, translated by Stephen Brinkley in 1579 as *The Exercise of a Christian Life*.²⁴ Parsons’s work became a spiritual handbook in its own right, and inspired a copycat Calvinist edition by Edmund Bunny, who sought to “purge it of certaine points that carryed ... some manifest error”, so that “the reading thereof might ... carry no hurt or danger withall”.²⁵ The reforming revisions included the excision of defences of clerical celibacy, and the substitution of “repentance” for “penance and satisfaction”. Parsons complained that Bunny’s version, which had gone through 32 editions by 1639, “maketh me to speak after the phrase of Protestantes ... like a good minister of England”.²⁶

The fact that a Jesuit missionary and polemicist could, through certain strategic editorial interventions, be made to speak in the voice of a good Protestant minister, is indicative of the confessional ambiguity surrounding the discourse of spiritual discipline at this juncture. Even when framed by apologetic arguments, mystical theology was a problematic field, and its proponents within the Catholic world were frequently and increasingly under suspicion for holding heterodox views. The enthusiastic Protestant reception of some of these texts before the civil wars, and their adoption of contemporary mystical themes and disciplines such as “mental prayer”, illustrates this ambiguity. Common themes and aspirations linked Reformed and certain Catholic writers, especially Jesuits: a thirst for devotional and moral rigour, for interior mortification; an appetite for introspection and self-examination; a strong focus on penance and transformation of life. Pointing out that Richard Baxter was inspired by reading Bunny’s Reformed edition of the *Christian Exercise*, Theodore Dwight Bozeman has argued that the main effect of the Catholic devotional crusade was to “strengthen Protestant resources”.²⁷ He suggests that the first generation of Puritans adapted and absorbed the traditional mystical motif of the “via purgativa”, and in doing so “fostered not so much a new tradition of piety as a separate evolution of the old.”²⁸ In both Catholic and Protestant devotional writing, mystical theology was woven into schemes for practical spiritual instruction to assist the faithful in the life of prayer. “Inward reformation” – a phrase frequently employed by early Stuart religious writers, among them Benet of Canfield, Edmund Bunny and the English translator of Calvin’s commentary on Hebrews – was an essential counterpart to the

²⁴ Gaspar de Loarte, *The Exercise of a Christian Life*, trans. Stephen Brinkley (London, 1579); see Victor Houlston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons’s Jesuit Polemic, 1580-1610* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 33-35.

²⁵ Edmund Bunny, *A booke of Christian exercise, appertaining to resolution* (London, 1584), §A2r.

²⁶ Robert Parsons, *A Christian directorie guiding men to their salvation* (s.l., 1585), §B4r; see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 76.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

outward processes of reform or confessionalisation.²⁹ Parsons' *Directory* perhaps had as much in common with the emerging genre of Puritan practical divinity as with the mystical theology expounded by mainland Catholic reformers; and indeed, this very distinction is hard to draw cleanly before the 1620s and 30s.

Similarly versatile were the devotional writings of the Spanish Dominican Luis de Granada (1504-1588). The case of Luis de Granada's reception by English Catholics and Protestants has been extensively and rewardingly explored in several recent studies, but it is worth revisiting briefly in order to illuminate changing attitudes towards mystical theology across the seventeenth century.³⁰ Unlike a number of other leading Hispanic reformers, notably Teresa of Avila (as mentioned above) and John of the Cross, whose radically apophatic mysticism was not translated into English until the nineteenth century, Luis de Granada was astonishingly widely read and valued by both Catholic and Protestant audiences.³¹ As Alexandra Walsham has noted, he was not exactly an unproblematic mouthpiece for Tridentine reform, having been accused of teaching *alumbrado* doctrines, that is, mystical teachings subversive of traditional ceremonies and observances in their emphasis on interior revelation and the indifferent status of external institutions.³² His *Libro de la oración y meditación* (1554) was placed on the Spanish Inquisition's Index between 1559 and 1576. This was not, of course, an isolated case. As Henry Kamen comments, a "whole generation of spirituality ... fell under suspicion because of the supposed danger from illuminism"; not least because *alumbrado* mysticism became confusingly associated with Lutheran and Reformed theology.³³ Despite Luis de Granada's later explicit repudiation of Protestant doctrines, his teachings appealed to readers in Reformed England. His turn to a more ethical, penitential and practical focus in his devotional writings, and the careful excision of references to mental prayer, made his teachings less redolent of illuminism.

The evolution of mystical theology in the European Counter-Reformation, especially in the seventeenth century, has come to be seen in terms of the systematization of a discipline, and its

²⁹ See John Calvin, *A commentarie on the whole Epistle to the Hebrewes* (London, 1605), 168; Benet of Canfield, *The rule of perfection* (Rouen, 1609), 33; Edmund Bunney, *Of the head corner-stone* (London, 1611), 401.

³⁰ See Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, 76; Alexandra Walsham, "Luis de Granada's Mission to Protestant England: Translating the Devotional Literature of the Spanish Counter-Reformation", in Teresa Bela, Clarinda Calma and Jolanta Rzegocka eds., *Publishing Subversive Texts in Elizabethan England and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), The Handpress World series vol. 39, 129-54; Miriam Castillo, "Catholic Translation and Protestant Translation: The Reception of Luis de Granada's Devotional Prose in Early Modern England", in *Translation and Literature* (2017), 26/2, pp. 145-61.

³¹ On the curious neglect of John of the Cross by contemporary translators, see Colin Thompson, "Dangerous Visions: The Experience of Teresa of Avila and the Teaching of John of the Cross" in Clare Copeland and Jan Machielson eds., *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 53-74.

³² Walsham, "Luis de Granada's Mission", 133-34.

³³ Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 97.

uneasy reconciliation to (or domestication by) an austere and authoritarian orthodoxy. Coinciding with the response to the Protestant schism, institutional opposition to mysticism and illuminism was manifest in a series of milestones: the suppression of the alumbrados from 1524, and the censorship of the texts of the Spirituali in the 1540s, the interrogation of several Spanish mystics of the Golden Age by the Inquisition in the later sixteenth century, and ultimately the condemnation of Quietist teachings in 1687. For all the riches of early modern Hispanic mysticism, the Catholic Church was not consistently hospitable to the claim to a direct mystical enlightenment. As Euan Cameron puts it in a recent study of mysticism in the age of reform, this claim “loses most credibility, or exposes its adherents to greatest suspicion, in those epochs where disputes over doctrine cast the cohesion of the ecclesial community into doubt”.³⁴ This is perhaps most true not only at times but also in places where doctrine is fiercely contested: Catholic reform in the English or the Dutch context at the turn of the seventeenth century was quite a different environment for mysticism than the reforming orders of late sixteenth-century Spain. The polemical use of mysticism against the new evangelical movement by the Carthusians and others could be seen as ironic, given that some of the same mystical authors (notably Tauler) had inspired not only Luther himself, but also the most revolutionary dissenters, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer among them. Although Luther ultimately rejected the perfectionist anthropology at the heart of mystical theology, the Taulerian emphasis on spiritual passivity, inward repentance and identification with Christ continued to shape Lutheran spirituality, especially that which followed the lead of Johann Arndt, as seventeenth-century Pietism consciously took its energies from the mystical tradition. Mystical theology came to occupy an ambiguous cross-confessional space, and its appropriation for polemical or apologetic purposes on either side became fraught with difficulty, given that both Catholic and Protestant magisterial reform had entailed some suppression of an illuministic strain.

This subversive potential in mysticism was recognised as part of its reception in the Protestant British Isles, but there remained a surprising openness to pre-Reformation and even contemporary Catholic mystical sources.³⁵ Theodore Bozeman has situated early Puritan spiritual writing within a “trans-confessional ‘devotional revival’ that swept both Catholic and Protestant Europe in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries”, and shown how it owed an unexpected debt to English Catholic translators.³⁶ Alec Ryrie has noted that the Calvinist churchman Joseph Hall’s wildly popular *Arte of Divine Meditation* (1606) drew extensively from Jean de Bruxelles’s *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium* (1494), a work which emerged from the Brethren of the Common Life and the *Devotio Moderna*. Ryrie describes this as “the watershed of the English Protestant

³⁴ Euan Cameron, “Ways of Knowing in the Pre- and Post-Reformation Worlds” in Sara S. Poor and Nigel Smith eds., *Mysticism and Reform, 1400-1750* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 30.

³⁵ See Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 234.

³⁶ Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, 74.

meditative tradition”, but suggests that this was not a “prodigal’s return: impoverished Protestant spirituality recognizing the greater riches of contemporary Catholicism”; instead, spiritual traditions across the confessional divide enjoyed “a shared spiritual ancestry”.³⁷ Through his exposition of the discipline of meditation, Hall hoped to advance “devotion, and the practise of true piety”, in contrast to the less edifying influence of “Polemicall bookes” which tend “rather to breede, than ende strifes”; or of “those which are doctrinall” which tend “rather to oppresse than satisfie the Reader”.³⁸ His vision of meditation could be regarded as distinctly Protestant, as Ryrie argues: dynamic and active rather than passive and contemplative. Nonetheless, his advocacy of reformation through inner, devotional renewal, as opposed to persuasion through doctrinal controversy and polemic, shared much with the Catholic project to convince heretics peacefully through mystical literature.

Especially in these more volatile confessional settings, theorists of the science of contemplation (now classified as “mystics”), were apparently on the defensive, forced in published apologies and theoretical systems for mystical theology to justify their practices as legitimately catholic. The Dutch Jesuit Maximilian van der Sandt’s *Theologia Mystica* (1627) and *Pro theologia mystica clavis* (1640) are exemplary texts in this genre, aiming to demonstrate the compatibility between mystical and scholastic theology, and to clarify obscure terms. A key dimension of the process of “reinventing” mystical theology was, as Michel de Certeau has most compellingly shown, the development of language. One typical recent account describes how the generous language of contemplation was replaced by this more specific, technical terminology of *mystical theology*, a reference to the title of Dionysius the Areopagite’s influential fifth-century work, which “delineates the soul’s ascent to God as a systematic denial of earthly signs”.

Unlike *contemplative theology*, a roomy phrase which incorporates an indefinite number of modes of contemplation, *mystical theology* organized the discipline on hierarchic, pseudo-Dionysian principles, focusing fierce attention on union with God as the true goal of the contemplative, now for the first time termed a *mystic*. It was vital to theorize and to experience this *unio mystica* correctly, not least because mystical theology was more likely than earlier contemplative theologies to make esoteric and exceptionalist claims for itself: claims understood as dangerous in rather the sense prophecy was dangerous, constituting a mode of spiritual authority that might challenge the authority of the Church and its Scriptures.³⁹

³⁷ Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 113-114.

³⁸ Joseph Hall, *The Arte of Meditation* (London, 1606), §A3v.

³⁹ Nicholas Watson, Introduction, in Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5-6.

Depending on one's perspective, the "mystic" was now either a trained professional in an esoteric science, or a maverick individual claiming a subjective, charismatic authority taking them outside the security of the universal Church. Often this contrast was gendered: the more unstable type of mystic was the female contemplative, her passivity and detachment making her vulnerable to other spiritual influences.⁴⁰

Augustine Baker and the Mystical Turn from Controversy

More than any other single individual in the English Counter-Reformation, the Benedictine spiritual writer Augustine Baker (1575-1641) contributed to the consolidation and self-consciousness of a "mystical way" after the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition in the English language, among both Catholic and Protestant readers. He translated anthologies of mystical writings and wrote guides to contemplation in the 1620s and 30s, while in exile in Cambrai and Douai. This was a period which has been described as one of "great trial for English Catholicism", despite the perception that "popery" was gathering strength, when steep fines were combined with popular hostility and even mob violence in the capital.⁴¹ Although the Catholic community seems to have grown during the Caroline period, it was under considerable pressure amid increasingly polarized religious politics. More widely, of course, these were the bloodiest decades of Europe's religious wars; even in a contemplative house in Northern France, it was not possible to be wholly insulated from these climactic events following generations of confessional turmoil. Baker's writings, so conspicuously disengaged from the politics of religion, were also significantly confined to manuscript publication until the 1650s, when an abridgement of his spiritual writings appeared as *Sancta Sophia* (1657), edited by the recent convert to Catholicism, Hugh or Serenus Cressy. Even now, some of Baker's writings are only accessible in scattered archives. The quietist method of contemplation and self-abnegation which he promoted was self-consciously anti-controversial, his refusal "to meddle in Secular affaires or Controuersies" extending to a critique and almost disavowal of the English mission.⁴² His experiences reflect the institutional marginalization of the mystical way in the seventeenth century in both Roman Catholicism and the Church of England, but the reception of his works also speaks for the powerful resonance of mystical theology, at a time when many sought a form of religion which transcended sordid secular politics. As the theorist who defined the development of both a mystical science and the figure of the "mystic" in English language, and contributed most to its alienation from the ecclesiastical establishment,

⁴⁰ See Moshe Sluhovskiy, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).

⁴¹ See K. Lindley, "The lay Catholics of England in the Reign of Charles I", in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971): 220-21.

⁴² Serenus Cressy, *Sancta Sophia, or, Directions for the Prayer of Contemplation* (London, 1657), 160.

Augustine Baker is of considerable interest to those examining developments in English Catholic spirituality.

On the one hand, Baker can be seen as a highly idiosyncratic figure. It would not be misleading to characterize him as a maverick spiritual director, advocating an obscure and rather exclusive method of contemplation (in prose which can be prolix and repetitious), and engaged in internecine disputes within his order; even within particular religious communities. As Bill Shiels has suggested, it would be a mistake to regard the spirituality of Baker or his followers as symptomatic of a general shift within English Catholicism towards a more irenic, introspective form of devotion.⁴³ On the other hand, Baker's legacy extended far beyond the manuscript remains he bequeathed to his community and his personal influence on individual sisters and brothers. His extensive work of translation and spiritual instruction, intended primarily for the edification of the Benedictine nuns at Cambrai, contributed to the formation of a mystical "canon", recovering medieval classics which became available in print for the first time as a result of his industry.⁴⁴ The controversies his ministry engendered within the Benedictine order also had wider implications: his apologists articulated a robust definition and defence of "mystike theologie", or "the mystike way of an internall life" as the purest and most abstracted spirituality, manifesting an acute awareness that this science of the interior was embattled in their own time.⁴⁵ The afterlife of Baker's writings as much as their contemporary significance contributed not only to the positive development of a separate discipline of mystical theology, but also provided the occasion, as I have shown elsewhere, for some of the most influential critiques of mystic divinity as enthusiasm in the Restoration period, and for the stigmatization of female visionaries as melancholics.⁴⁶

Baker voiced a profound disillusionment with compromised public institutions, and politicized religion in a climate of confessional conflict and raging polemic. His biographical peregrinations – which saw him pass in and out of successive phases in exile, in the cloister, in prayerful retirement, in scholarly endeavour and in missionary action – reflect his uneasy negotiation of the "inner" and the "outer" callings of his faith. Baker wrote of several conversions in his life, the most important of which was not necessarily his reconciliation to the Roman Church, but rather his incremental turning to the way of contemplation. According to his own account, his earliest religious crisis was brought about by a miracle high over the river Monnow, when his horse was turned around,

⁴³ William Shiels, "English Catholics at War and Peace" in Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby eds., *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 151.

⁴⁴ See Elisabeth Dutton and Victoria Van Hying, "Augustine Baker and the Mystical Canon", in Geoffrey Scott ed., *Dom Augustine Baker (1575-1641)* (Leominster: Gracewing Publishing, 2012), pp. 85-110.

⁴⁵ Francis Gascoigne in John Clark ed., *Francis Gascoigne: An Apologie for myselfe about Fr. Baker's Doctrine; Abbesse Christina Brent: Discourse concerning Father Baker's Doctrine; Augustine Baker: Admittance; Bonilla; Ricerius* (Salzburg, 2011), p. 17. From Ampleforth Abbey MS 48, dated c.1653.

⁴⁶ Sarah Apetrei, "Between the rational and the mystical: the inner life and the early English Enlightenment", in Sara S. Poor and Nigel Smith eds., *Mysticism and Reform, 1400-1750* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 198-219.

delivering him from the perils of a collapsed footbridge. This was a turning from the nominal profession of religion to passionate zeal, rather than to a specific confessional position: he wrote in his autobiographical “Rythms” that he was brought “out of meer Atheism / Into True Catholicism ... For before my Conversion / I was of no Religion”.⁴⁷ He described his parents – who had been born into the essentially Catholic “Legall & Common Extern Religion of the Kingdome” under Henry VIII, and then married “in the Exercise of the Catholick Religion” – as “neutrals” under Elizabeth I, “neither indeed true Catholicks, for perfect knowledg, Belief & practice, nor yet meer protestants or otherwise Hereticks in their Belief”.⁴⁸ Although he reports that his father was somewhat inclined to piety, Baker was clearly later repelled by this secular complacency, this pragmatic neutrality in religion, and it was from this tepidity that he claimed to have converted. He seems also to have become disgusted by the strategies of Protestant apologists and biblical scholars, who learned Hebrew only in order to “Exult & Triumph ... over the Catholicks”.⁴⁹ Tellingly, one of Baker’s biographers, his close companion Leander Prichard, remarked that the only thing he loved about the Protestant faith was the “Singing of psalms ... he thought it was the most taking thing, that the protestants practised to get people together, and keep them in the Church”. The experiential high of congregational singing was much more effective than the “Hearing of Sermons”.⁵⁰

The most illuminating analysis of the effects of the Protestant schism in producing atheism comes in Prichard’s account, where he describes the “Chief Marke or Sign of Protestancy” as “Going to Church”: in other words, outward conformity.⁵¹ The things which “Averted [Baker] from Protestant Religion” included the secular motives which seemed to lie behind the schism:

1st, the Manner of Introducing it into the Christian World. Apostate Priests & Friers preaching and setting it forth out of a Wanton Libertinism. Princes and States Embracing it, out of a Greedy Desire, to be Possessed of the spoils of the Church, and the people out of an Innate Hatred to the Clergy. 2. It was so tepidly practised, and God so coldly Worshiped in it, that he Conceived, surely it was not a thing of Great worth, even in the Estimation of those who professed it. For there was not

⁴⁷ Augustine Baker, “Rythms”, in “Quadrilogus, or, A Collection of Four Treatises Concerning the Life & Writings of the Venerable Father Augustin Baker”, Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 1755, fol. 4r.

⁴⁸ “The Treatise of the Ven: Fa: August: Baker Concerning his Own Life” in “Quadrilogus”, fols. 14r-15r. Baker’s associate, Leander Prichard, claimed instead that the Baker parents were those “whom the Protestants call Church-Papists, that is, Men, who did Believe Catholicke Religion in their Hearts, but did outwardly practise the Protestant, For Fear or Interest”. In “The Second Treatise Concerning the Life and Writings of the Venerable Father, Fa: Augustin Baker” in *ibid.*, fol. 74r.

⁴⁹ “Treatise of the Ven: Fa: August: Baker”, fol. 33v.

⁵⁰ “The Second Treatise”, fols. 59r-v.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 73v.

yet Risen among us, or at least they were not so Common, Those Zealots, which we now Call Puritans.⁵²

Disenchantment with this external show of religion coincided with falling “out of Love wth Erasmus, as a Derider of all Religions, and Consequently, a Leader into Atheism”.⁵³ This assessment of Protestantism as an essentially secular movement, and a high road to atheism, also shaped Baker’s response to the worldly disputations in which some Catholics became embroiled. True conversion could not be the fruit of the bloodless speculation which characterized Protestant theology. He was of the opinion that “More are Converted to Catholick Religion, by Reading of Catholick Books, then by the Disputes of Learned Men”.⁵⁴ Serenus Cressy’s late seventeenth-century life of Baker speaks of his alienation from theological disputation as a prelude to his break with the Church of England, and of two conversions: the first “from error & schism to Catholic Unity & afterwards to a state of Religion & Contemplation”.⁵⁵ Throughout his career, Baker evinced much less concern about the conversion of England and the correction of heresy than he did about interior reform. His spiritual direction did not extend to informing the nuns about the theological errors of Protestantism. He recommended the mystical writings of the Flemish Benedictine Louis de Blois to the sisters at Cambrai, but warned them that the same author’s attacks on Reformation heresy were “not for y^r use”.⁵⁶

While still in England, Baker had become a chaplain at the Devonshire home of Philip Fursden in May 1620.⁵⁷ There, in what Baker’s biographers seem to have considered an exemplary or illustrative episode, he was instrumental in the conversion of Fursden’s mother-in-law, “a devout and zealous Protestant”. It is an illuminating episode when it comes to analysing Baker’s attitude to confessional controversy. This lady had stoutly resisted the efforts of several other missionary priests to persuade her by argument: “[b]ut she observed that Father Baker, unlike his brethren, made no apparent efforts to make her a Catholic.” When she quizzed him on this oversight, he replied that “he anticipated no good from disputation and therefore abstained from it, but that he truly desired her conversion and daily prayed for it”. He suggested that, as well as hearing the arguments on both sides, she should “join your prayers also, but prayers not according to the fashion of your church, but such as are made with pure submission of mind and indifference, flowing from a soul free from all worldly interests or designs”. Rather than submit to others’ judgments in a matter of eternal significance, she should go directly to the author of her salvation:

⁵² Ibid., fols. 75r-v.

⁵³ Ibid., fols. 74v-75r.

⁵⁴ “The Second Treatise”, fol. 75v.

⁵⁵ “The Life of the Ven. Augustine Baker of the Holy Order of St Bennet”, Downside Abbey Baker MS 44, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Augustine Baker, *Directions for Contemplation: Book H*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: Analecta Cartusiana, 2000), 82.

⁵⁷ See David Lunn, *The English Benedictines, 1540-1688: From Reformation to Revolution* (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 205.

for, “the only true master and teacher of prayer is God”.⁵⁸ Elsewhere, Cressy expanded on Baker’s method of conversion:

His opinion indeed was that next to prayer the most probable means of finding the truth was reading with indifference, & so as to give liberty to the Divine Spirit to operate afterwards. As for disputing he made not so much account of it, by reason that it is apt to raise in men’s minds passions, desire of victory, unless the disputant’s heart were by a serious conversion first prepared for divine truth; although he knew one having been converted by occasion of a better reprehension that a good Catholic priest gave him in that he being a vain young man should dare to censure & contemn the Fathers & Counsels of the Church and said by another Catholic gentleman merily to have been scolded into the Church.⁵⁹

These reports of Baker’s preference for prayer over persuasion are reflected in his own account of his spiritual progress, which he emphasises was “masterless, yet not without a master” – he had taken “the spirit of God for his interior director”.⁶⁰

Baker’s personal dedication to the inner life of holiness over outward acts and theological argumentation must be viewed at least in part against the backdrop of conflict between the English Benedictines and the Jesuits. His rhetoric against disputation as a strategy for conversion was certainly linked to his hostility towards Jesuit (and, for that matter, Benedictine) activism in the mission field. Contemplation is presented not merely as a supplement but as a rival to Counter-Reformation mission. Stefania Tutino describes the outlook of the revived Benedictine order as characterized by “the absolute negation of any link between Catholicism and sedition, a committed anti-Jesuitism, a Gallican-flavored insistence on the need of distinguishing the pope from the church.”⁶¹ Polemic and disputation were jesuitical activities: the great theological antagonist of English Protestants, Cardinal Bellarmine, was of course a Jesuit. Against this view, a recent study of Baker has argued that “Baker’s project has more to do with the reconnection of English monastic spirituality with the European Catholic mainstream ... than it has to do with a clash between Benedictine and Jesuit spiritualities, or a revival of the pre-Reformation English mystical tradition.”⁶² The mystic authors that formed his “canon” included English but also European authors: he held up as authorities Dionysius, Herp, Suso and Tauler; among contemporaries, he was deeply impressed by Louis de Blois, and the Carthusians Johannes Justus von Lansperg and Constantin de Barbanson, as well as his fellow countryman, the Capuchin friar Benet Fitch. Rather, Baker was

⁵⁸ “The Life of the Ven. Augustine Baker”, 93.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶¹ Stefania Tutino, *Law and Conscience: Catholicism in Early Modern England, 1570-1625* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 80.

⁶² John Douglas Barrett, “‘Such a World of Books’: Spiritual Reading in the Cambrai Treatises of Fr. Augustine Baker OSB”, University of London, Heythrop College unpub. PhD thesis (2011), 107.

keen to dispel the parochialism and polemical insularity of English Counter-Reformation discourse and to engage British Catholics in a wider spiritual renewal. Baker was caught up in much wider developments at the heart of the Catholic Reformation over the status of mystical theology; as much as he was in local antagonisms between rival orders.

A major controversy among the nuns at Cambrai, involving Baker and another confessor, Father Francis Hull, hinged on the question of authority. Baker accused Francis Hull of preaching excessively long sermons containing “austere and terrible Doctrin” about judgement, which put the ladies of the house into such a fright that “it hindered their sleepe, and much distempered their bodies, and indisposed the same for the time for the functions belonging to them”.⁶³ Not only this, but he brought in a puritanical and authoritarian “spirituallitie” which was not “according to the spirit of this house”: a controlling, “monarchicall Authoritie and government”.⁶⁴ Most of the objections which Hull brought against Baker had to do with clerical authority and confession. He complained that Baker had introduced an antinomian spirit, providing the nuns with “interpretations and Expositions uppon the Rule, Constitutions, Ordinances of visits, and Comands of Superiors, unknown and unapproved by Superiors; whereby he geveth them too much Libertie, and maketh them neglect, carelessly or wilfullie transgresse, or disesteeme the Rule, Statutes, ordinances and commands, as not binding ... as being rather burthens, then helps, to perfection”.⁶⁵ He protested against the doctrine that contemplatives were not bound to open their conscience to the Abbess or other superior; against the practice of infrequent confession; against unspecified manuscript books by Baker which tended towards the “destroieing [of] Obedience and the Authoritie of Superiors”. The last and summary objection held that “the Authoritie due to Priests, Confessariis, and Superiors is by Father Bakers Doctrin diminished, and more geven to women.”⁶⁶ Peter Salvin, Baker’s friend and biographer, summarized the accusations thus:

That he Taught too much Liberty of Spirit, and so Inclined to puritanism, slighted Obedience, & Regular Observances; that Those who pretended to follow his Way, Bandy against Superiors, Breed factions in the Congregation, and the like. Arguing just as Hereticks do, against Catholics: Reproaching us, that we are superstitious, Idolatrous, Tyrannicall, Bloud suckers &c.⁶⁷

Significantly, Baker’s opponents perceived that his teaching was indistinguishable from Protestant iconoclasm, undermining Catholic worship and discipline as superstition and tyranny. It could easily

⁶³ “A Letter to the V. R. Fa: President”, in Bodl. MS Rawl. C.460, pp. 48, 58, 66, 71-72.

⁶⁴ “A Letter” and “An Answer to Fa: Francis Hull his Obiections” in *ibid.*, 118, 249.

⁶⁵ “An Answer”, 286.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 295, 310-11, 349, 502.

⁶⁷ “Ye Fourth Treatise Written by ye V R Father Fa: Peeter Salvin A Disciple & intimate friend of ye venerable fathers”, in “Quadrilogus”, fol. 228r.

be a Protestant spiritualist arguing that to take the place of the Holy Spirit as a priest in offering direction is to “Take his Office from Him ... we take away The True & Lively Spirit and Teaching of God, and Obtrude & Thrust upon them, our own Dead Fancies & Conceits”.⁶⁸

Conclusions

It is not difficult to see why mysticism provided apologetic resources for Catholic reformers in an age of actual religious violence, as well as pamphlet wars. Western Christendom was disintegrating, and mystical writings offered a pacific, unitive spiritual language, as well as the impression of universality and detachment from secular entanglements. Mysticism transcended controversies and the particularities of local situations. Claiming this tradition for Catholicism was another means to show how Protestantism, like all heresy, was human, timebound, a contextually specific religious expression. The irony, of course, was that mysticism did indeed have a way of transcending specificity, in the sense that its appeal complicated institutional identities and crossed confessional boundaries. Some of the most radical anti-formalist Protestants in the context of the English civil wars in the 1640s were avid readers of mystical texts in a similar tradition to that which inspired Augustine Baker: Pseudo-Dionysius, Tauler, Benet of Canfield (or Benet Fitch). The proximity of mystics to illuminism, and heterodoxy on external observances, was not only a perception. Certain Quakers read widely in mystical theology, and found particularly deep sympathy with Baker himself.⁶⁹ The radicals found in the mystical “negative way” an inspiration to seek liberty of conscience and abandon institutional forms altogether, as corrupted by worldly power, or else meaningless. Baker himself took steps in an anti-authoritarian direction, and worried about the priest’s usurpation of the Holy Spirit in the inner life. It may also be possible to see in the canon-building enterprise and rhetoric around mystical writings in Baker’s circle, but also the Quaker apologists, an incipient conception of neoplatonic mysticism as a “perennial philosophy” transcending religious difference.

⁶⁸ Ibid., fols. 241r-v.

⁶⁹ George Keith, *Divine Immediate Revelation and Inspiration, continued in the true church. Second part* (London, 1685), 45-46.

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Faith and Fighting

An Interview with Canon Professor Michael Snape

Michael Snape

Canon Professor Michael Snape, Michael Ramsey Professor of Anglican Studies at Durham University

Abstract

The following is an interview hosted by the *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* (JOGTS) with Canon Professor Michael Snape—Michael Ramsey Professor of Anglican Studies at Durham University—in February 2023. We discussed the themes of “Faith and Fighting” in theology and religion in relation to Professor Snape’s extensive scholarship and historical work on the relationship between religion and warfare. The interview was conducted by Dallas Callaway and Victoria Phillips.

Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society (JOGTS): How did you first become interested in your work on warfare and ethics? Was there an “Ah-ha!” moment that made you recognise your desire to pursue this line of inquiry?

Professor Michael Snape (MS): No. There wasn't any kind of spontaneous sense of inspiration. Yet, one of the things that struck me growing up in the latter decades of the twentieth century was the number of people around me who had undertaken some kind of military service. My father, my grandfather, neither of whom were professional soldiers, but that was a common pattern in the United Kingdom at the time. Even though we'd never had a Vietnam experience and conscription had ended in 1963, there were still plenty of people who'd been in the First World War, in the Second World War, or who had undertaken National Service in the post-Second World War years. And that was a phenomenon. British society today has a far smaller percentage of people who would have immediate contact with family members who had served in any capacity.



Michael Snape, “Faith and Fighting,” *JOGTS* 4 (2023), pp. 28–44.

But in my own generation, it was quite common. I was always struck by the faith-lives of people who had experienced military service, who had experienced conflict. And I was glad of the opportunity to begin to write about their experiences in a way—which seemed to me at the time, back at the beginning of this century—more objective than some of the writing which had dominated the historiography up to that point.

So, there was no “Damascene moment,” as it were. I began my academic career in 1994 in the post-Cold War era, the era of international optimism, when there was a great deal of faith in multi-nationalism. The end of the Cold War seemed to confirm an established narrative in the history of modern western Christianity and conflict, basically a fundamentally pacifist take on the subject. The role of the historian was to be critical of the “mistakes” which had been made in the past, and to call out church leaders for their failings, which served as object lessons in the Cold War era. And I was quite keen to diverge from that because I don't think it did justice to the whole panorama of experience and perspective.

As a post-graduate student, I didn't think I had permission to write on this subject—military history. I wanted permission to write in a particular vein, to look at [it] from a particular perspective. In the English-speaking world, to say the very least, the subject is often shunned implicitly and even explicitly. So, my original research, which I loved—which I felt very fulfilled by—was looking at Anglican life, or the life of members of the Church of England in 18th century England, in the northwest of England in an era of growing industrialisation. I loved that research, but it was really my former supervisor, Professor Hugh McLeod at Birmingham, who knew I had other interests. He was a series editor on Christianity and the Modern World for Routledge. In 1996/7, he asked me if I would be interested in writing a volume for that series on war and religion. And I thought, this is my opportunity, really. And I was very grateful for that chance, at that time, to write in that particular way.

JOGTS: In your recent book, you cover an expansive epoch: colonial and decolonisation conflicts, the two World Wars, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War. Based on your surveys of these specific conflicts, are there any theological and/or religious issues, themes or doctrines that have contributed to the onset and duration of these wars, such that you would now consider them to be recurrent or common to acts of warfare more generally?

MS: I'm not a theologian, let alone a systematic theologian. I'm speaking as a historian. But I can single out a tendency, as it were, for theology to be reactive to the situation of conflict. And there are a couple of headline themes that strike me from the British experience. One of the things which impacted British Protestantism very heavily in the First World War was the question of the afterlife and prayers for the dead. Now, prayers for the dead were extremely rare, even in the Church of England, let alone the Free Churches or in Scottish Presbyterianism or Irish Presbyterianism or the Church of Ireland, before the First World War. But the

overwhelming pastoral need to provide comfort to relatives who had lost young men as soldiers in the trenches of the Western Front and elsewhere forced a nascent reconsideration of the concept or doctrine of the communion of saints, the efficacy of prayers for the dead.

And so, what had been a controversial practice in the Church of England in 1914 was widely accepted as standard practice by 1918. There were some bumps along the way: protests in 1917 by a couple of Evangelical bishops about forms of prayer which had been issued under the authority of the archbishops of Canterbury and York on the third anniversary of the outbreak of the war, August 1917. There were objections that these forms of prayer included explicit prayers for the dead. But by 1918, even those protests died away. And now, although it's often fudged (we “remember before God”, as it were) the idea of praying for the dead, or at least moving in that direction, particularly the war dead, is something which is now common practice, particularly in the Church of England. So that's one reactive element.

Second, one of the things that's been overlooked in our understanding of how theological themes are shaped to meet the requirements or the needs of wartime situations is the theme of sacrifice. It's often argued that church leaders, particularly in the First World War, emphasised the need to go out and kill Germans. There is a rather spurious story that the Bishop of London delivered a sermon in 1915 in which he exhorted his listeners to “Kill Germans”. And that's not only a mistake in terms of [the] misreading of what actually happened, but of the dominant theological theme. The need to sacrifice oneself, the need to be prepared to sacrifice for a greater end, fed into army morale during both World Wars and, to a large extent, still feeds into military morale today. The idea is that one's service, one's sacrifice, will help to create a better world, which, in a sense, is redemptive and therefore Christ-like. This is a very interesting theme which commentators have overlooked: if one looks at what sermon literature has survived from military chaplains—British military chaplains in the First World War—the emphasis is on sacrifice, not on going out and killing the enemy. But that particular theme has tremendous traction. And even speaking to chaplains today and looking at the literature which exists on the British military, this still has tremendous traction in military circles.

Those two themes, prayer for the dead and sacrifice, met with the theological concept of the suffering God. [Geoffrey Studdert] Kennedy popularised this in his very colloquial fashion. Kennedy, being a very famous British army chaplain, otherwise known as “Woodbine Willie”, popularised the notion of the suffering God. Jürgen Moltmann seized hold of and ran with this, particularly in the 1960s and 70s. Now it's a theological commonplace. But at the time, in the years of the First World War, it was earth-shaking in terms of what Kennedy was proposing about the nature of God and the concern of God for the suffering of humanity—and the involvement of God.

JOGTS: Going back to the theme of sacrifice. Is there more of an emphasis of this in Anglican circles? What about passages of scripture? Do they talk about Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, or is it centred around Christ?

MS: In many respects, it's a mix. It's a hybrid approach. Think of the way in which the cross, in terms of British military memorialisation, is still the central symbol of sacrifice for acts of commemoration. There are attempts by Humanists to try and secularise this kind of cult of memorialisation/remembrance. But I can't see it working because it's so ingrained in the way things are done. I think one of the dangers, obviously, of this particular tendency, is to elide the suffering of the service man or woman with the suffering of Christ. Theologians and church people in the First World War, when this discourse was popularised, felt very uneasy with this use of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ in warfare. And it's very easy to see why they felt uneasy with that elision. However, sacrifices are made [and allusions are made to them] indirectly. If you look at the architecture of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries, which are famous and prototypical of military cemeteries throughout the world, the Cross of Sacrifice that stands in the middle of each one of these was deliberately named and designed by a son of the Bishop of London. The Stone of Remembrance, which is also situated in Commonwealth War Graves cemeteries, is not only altar-like, but it also alludes to the potential sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, the willingness of one generation to see another sacrificed, because the call of the Divine is so strong, and requires that sacrifice.

The tropes of sacrifice are drawn from several quarters. And all of these quarters were appropriated for the purpose of explaining the need for perseverance and sustaining the suffering which war inevitably entails.

JOGTS: Let's shift to contemporary topics and the current world stage. In your recent book, the concluding chapter contains some early reflections on the war in Ukraine in the months after it began. It has been nearly a year since you penned these reflections. How would you assess or change those reflections now?

MS: The postscript to the book was something which I never anticipated writing. It was written on the hoof as the book was going through production. But the themes that I raised, the ideas, the questions, the critique, have stood the test of time. I was critical of the way in which what is effectively a functional pacifism had taken over, not just the outlook of the Church of England, but many mainstream churches in the West. That left them ill-prepared to comment on the act of aggression and Putin's invasion of Ukraine. And the game of catch-up has been quite interesting. For example, the Archbishop of Canterbury is leery of using the term "Just War," but he said only last week that Ukraine's defence of itself, its own nationhood, has to be defended, has to be supported by the West, and that the act of invasion was an act of monumental evil.

This language echoes the language used by the archbishops of Canterbury and York on the day of the invasion. So, there is a movement towards accepting that, in certain circumstances, there is a need to actually arm and sustain a particular war effort. Now, this is moving somewhat from the dominant mood of the Church of England's view of war in the early years of the century, in the light of Iraq, arguably even of Afghanistan, as well.

This is a war which could well last for a number of years, and one whose outcome could enable a further invasion of Taiwan by China. We are living in a world which is haunted by state-on-state conflict, which we were told was not going to happen after the fall of the Soviet Union. And it has returned with a vengeance.

The churches need to reengage with the “Just War” tradition to come to terms with a consistent and Christian perspective on conflict. Today, obviously, there is the nuclear shadow. There are all sorts of complications, which generations in the past, or certainly before 1945, didn't have to negotiate. There is a major, major need for a reconsideration of the church's view on war and peace—and other issues which are corollaries of that. The Church of England, quite rightly, had set itself against the arms trade, as had many other churches. But of course, we see arms flowing into Ukraine in abundance at present. It's boom time for arms dealers.

All of this must be factored into the church's reappraisal of its approach to questions of war and peace, which had drifted. It had not moved *consciously* into what I have called functional pacifism. There needs to be a shakeup, a thoroughgoing revisiting of these perspectives. That's not to say that Christian pacifism is illegitimate; it is something that that should be challenged. I'm calling for a thoroughgoing appraisal of possible responses, that are informed, intelligent, and aware of the issues which are driving the foreign policies of authoritarian regimes. Not only in Russia and China, but elsewhere.

JOGTS: Has the Church of England's response to the war in the Ukraine been similar or dissimilar, relative to World War II or the Cold War?

MS: During the First and the Second World Wars, if you look at the leadership of the Church of England as represented by the two archbishops, there was a predictable, but nonetheless a considered, response. One was triggered by the invasion of Belgium by Germany in August 1914; the other was triggered by the invasion of Poland by Germany in September 1939. Even if not closely articulated in terms of “Just War” theory, there was a clear response. Britain in 1914 and 1939 was justified in taking up arms. A similar view was taken in 1950 with North Korea's invasion of South Korea. In order to uphold the authority of the fledgling United Nations, there was a more convergent approach adopted between church and state. That's not to say that the leadership of the Church of England was marching in lockstep with military strategists or politicians. Something which is very much underplayed in the literature, which deserves to be

stressed more, is the capacity of the churches to be a critical friend, even in the context of armed conflict. One can look at the view taken by Archbishop [Randall] Davidson in the First World War of the use of poison gas, and the bombing of civilian areas in Germany, although aerial bombing of civilian targets was very much in its infancy in the First World War. So, there were those points of difference.

And in the Second World War, Archbishop [William] Temple in the Church of England came out very strongly against something which was known as “hate training” in the British Army. It was a method of training which was designed to inculcate a sense of personal hatred towards the enemy. These training methods, which focused on the use of the bayonet, involved copious quantities of all sorts of rather dodgy accessories, such as quantities of animal blood. It is not the business of the church to condone the cultivation of hate. Hate is not part of the “Just War” tradition. The “Just War” tradition is rooted in love. “Hate training” was contrary to what the Church of England expected the state to support and for the military authorities to condone. These stands should be more widely recognised.

The iconic position taken by the Church of England in the Second World War was obviously Bishop George Bell's position vis-a-vis strategic bombing. It has been celebrated in the post-war and nuclear era by Bell's admirers. There was division over this approach among the bishops of the Church of England. Archbishop Temple, a hero of the post-war Church of England, died prematurely in 1944. Temple, who had a very balanced view of things, wasn't prepared to condemn strategic bombing. He didn't see the difference between strategic bombing in this context of the Second World War, and the bombardment of medieval cities by catapults in centuries gone by, because they're all indiscriminate—all unpleasant, as it were.

The legacy of strategic bombing has haunted the imagination of the Church of England, particularly as the threat of nuclear weapons took danger to another level. Even though the Church of England didn't come out four-square against the strategic bombing of Germany, or indeed Japan, during the Second World War, it didn't mean that the Church of England was uncritical. And that capacity of being a critical friend, I think, needs to be recognised in the historiography.

JOGTS: Your work has also examined the fascinating, if alarming and disturbing, period of human history which marked the advent of weaponry endowed with the capacity for not only mass casualties, but indeed the complete annihilation of humankind. As you've studied persons living and writing during this period, have you found that specific doctrines of eschatology, immortality, or something else, have emerged as salient or otherwise at the forefront of ecclesial practice?

MS: Classic Christian apocalyptic imaginary fed into opposition to nuclear weapons. The early leaders of the CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament] often represented people of faith. One of the first chairs of CND was John Collins, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, who had been an RAF [Royal Air Force] chaplain in the Second World War, and had opposed strategic bombing. The Book of Revelation and other classic Christian imaginings feed into visions of a nuclear apocalypse and inform opposition to them.

But some of the theology done under this heading was actually quite mundane. Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury throughout the 1950s, said that as far as he knew, it was not necessarily part of God's plan that God didn't want to see nuclear Armageddon. Maybe that was part of the whole scheme of humanity's history. Now, that might sound incredibly callous to us, but he wasn't an accomplished theologian. He was simply commenting on the fact that maybe this nuclear era is a sign of the end of time. Maybe this is something which is all part of an eschatology, which, however uncomfortable, is nonetheless working itself out.

Christopher Chavasse, the bishop of Rochester in the 1950s, had served as an army chaplain in the First World War. He had opposed the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, but during the 1950s, he began to adopt a pro-nuclear-weapon stance, seeing that the threat was strong, particularly with the Korean War and with the [Soviet] crushing of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956. There was the intention, centred in Moscow—arguably Beijing, as well—to ensure that the world turn communist, and that perhaps nuclear Armageddon was a preferable option. Now, we might shrink and recoil from all of this, but this is somebody who is speaking from the experience of two World Wars, who, particularly in the aftermath of the Second World War, had begun to see things in starkly dualistic terms: good and evil.

It's an uncomfortable reflection, but that's what a bishop of the Church of England was saying in the 1950s. And I think, again, what's interesting is the famous debate, which was held in the Church of England in the early 1980s in General Synod, about "The Church and the Bomb" report, which advocated unilateral nuclear disarmament. What led the Synod to vote this down was the intervention of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, who had actually earned a Military Cross as a tank commander in Northwest Europe in 1945. The Church of England, in terms of the Archbishop of Canterbury at that time, was unique in having a war hero at its head. Robert Runcie said he didn't see unilateralism, even at the time of heightened tensions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, as the best guarantee of future peace, or as the best means of avoiding nuclear Armageddon. To come from somebody like Runcie, a very respected Archbishop of Canterbury, with a strong military record—and also somebody who had actually killed people—was a very strong pastoral intervention. He should be understood and comprehended and appreciated more widely. The constant problem is that those who say that,

under certain circumstances, war might be the least bad option, are easily opening themselves to charges of being pro-war.

In terms of my own work, I have run that risk—I have taken criticism for that. What I'm arguing for is a greater awareness of the *pacifists*. It's a hard term to enunciate—the *pacifist*—strand within Anglicanism, within mainstream Christianity. That which holds that war is abhorrent, but at times is arguably the least bad option. And that reality has to be confronted and accepted. And that, of course, is distinct from *pacifism*.

JOGTS: Given your work on the relationship between the church and the armed forces, what are the most significant lessons that you have learned in the course of your research? For example, are there any lessons that you hope would become more widely known by not only members of the church and military, but also by elected government officials and citizens more generally?

MS: I think one of the key realisations in looking at this subject, particularly as it has unfolded over more recent decades, is the fact that religious factors are too often readily eliminated or filtered out of our analysis of contemporary complexities. We are locked in a Western paradigm of secularisation: religion is becoming more redundant, more marginal. Therefore, we don't feel we need to think about it and its effects in other contexts.

The idea that religion only began to resurface from 2001 onwards (with 9/11), as a factor in conflicts with which the UK has been involved, is completely spurious. Obviously, it was present very strongly in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Northern Ireland. It was present in Cyprus. These religious factors have never disappeared, but somehow a secular filter has been applied to the minds of civil servants, politicians, church people, military people—who all refuse to see these factors.

One of the lessons, which is a homegrown lesson, comes across from the experience of British forces in Afghanistan. In the past few years, vigil services, repatriation services, and the need for religion to provide some kind of explanatory framework, some kind of comfort, even for a largely post-Christian generation, has become clear. Religion is still a significant element in sustaining morale and operations. According to surveys, even personnel in Afghanistan who regarded themselves as atheists acknowledged the value of repatriation services, services of remembrance, the presence of chaplains, et cetera. So that's one thing that we can actually use as a take-home in the British context. One, arguably, of many.

One of the interesting pieces of evidence from Afghanistan, which has always intrigued me, was the way in which British officers seeking to engage with civilian leaders found that there was very little opposition if they happened to bring a chaplain with them. In fact, there was a certain amount of interest in having a chaplain present. There was no hostility towards a chaplain. The real hostility lay towards those people who seemed to disavow any kind of belief, because this

represented the ultimate act of profanity, as well as being redolent of the attitude and mindset of the Soviets in the earlier Afghan conflict. So, the idea that advocating that taking no religious position is somehow neutral, and will go down well with everybody, is proven nonsense.

There has to be a far more intelligent appraisal and understanding of the fact that where the West has led, the rest of the world will not necessarily follow—arguably in terms of perspectives on religion, as well. In fact, other non-Western nations will, in many circumstances, positively react against the West. A more complex, nuanced, and full understanding [of] the role of religion as a driving factor within conflicts, as well as a sustaining factor within conflict, must be grasped within the public square. And it's in all sorts of corners, I should say, in the public square.

JOGTS: I want to follow up on your last response. I'm completely fascinated by the way in which religion, and particularly Christianity, was used so easily in the Cold War by the West. Mark Pomar recently wrote a book about the Cold War radio,¹ and he said his last chapter on religion and the way in which the radios used religious broadcasting is the most important chapter of his book, and yet no one has paid any attention to it. This runs parallel to what you're saying. What I find quite paradoxical is that during the Cold War, it was the “atheist Soviets,” and Lenin saying that “religion was the opiate of the masses,” which gave the West such great purchase. And in a sense, the secularisation of that religious rhetoric became both powerful and toxic. Now there seems to be this really interesting switch with Russia and the East using religion to create popular cohesion with Moscow. I was wondering if you could speak about the way in which, during the post-Cold War period, religion has been instrumentalised by those who were pro-atheist, as it were, during the Cold War.

MS: I think there was another statement by Lenin in which he said: religion is like a nail, the harder you hammer it, the deeper it goes. One of the fascinating global developments in terms of the religious landscape over the past thirty years has been the resurgence of religion, or at least religious identity, in the post-communist world.

The Balkan Civil War was ushered in by the collapse of Yugoslavia. In the early nineties, we saw a society, which had been held together by a communist system for nearly fifty years, break apart along old ethnic and religious lines. The ferocity of that conflict was dramatic in a society which had subscribed nominally to an atheistic ideology for decades. The religious aspects of that conflict: the deliberate destruction of your opponent's places of worship (be they churches or mosques), the desecration of cemeteries, the old characterisations, which seemed to spring from a forgotten past, but just basically ran to the fore again in Kosovo in the mid-to-late-nineties. We saw the resurrection of a Serbian nationalism, or the reassertion of a Serbian nationalism, which turned very much on the sacrifice of Saint Lazar, the King of Serbia who died fighting the Turks

¹ Mark G. Pomar, *Cold War Radio: The Russian Broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2022).

at the Battle of Kosovo. These old tropes reasserted themselves with surprising violence and rapidity in the light of the collapse of that system.

In the Soviet Union, with the emergence of the Russian Federation with Russia at the head, who could doubt the power and strength of Russian Orthodoxy as an ethnic identifier? Also, the fact that Putin's mother was ostensibly a believer, and that he has always been a closet believer, despite his links with the KGB. But, in a sense, that exposes some of the anomalies of the communist system. It has often been argued that what defeated Nazi Germany and its allies in the war on the Eastern Front from 1941 to 45 wasn't communism, it was Russian nationalism. The "Great Patriotic War" saw Soviet tanks rumble into Berlin emblazoned with the Orthodox cross, some of which were funded by church collections.

Stalin had basically released the church from the shadows after the intense persecution of the 1930s. Georgy Zhukov, the marshal of the Soviet Union and most important military commander in the Second World War, is now claimed as being a closet believer by his daughter—this fits the narrative of Putin's Russia. Also, the creation (or the building) quite recently of a massive military memorial on the battlefield of Kursk in 1943. In July 1943, I don't know how many Soviet soldiers who died there would've thought they would ever be remembered as heroes of Russian Orthodoxy, particularly as many of them would've been (at least historically) Muslim, or even Buddhist or Jewish. But nonetheless, this is a memory that has been appropriated.

But there was always a certain degree of constancy that Orthodoxy had the power to mobilise Russians, even in the Stalinist era. It's interesting that in a moment of relative peace in the 1960s, with the Soviet Union rebuilding itself and the rollback of the Stalinist legacy, that Khrushchev renews the persecution of religion.

I think the example of the Soviet Union and what Putin is tapping into today has always been a very strong and powerful undercurrent in Russian life. Russian nationalism is heavily inflected and, in fact, defined by a sense of Orthodox distinctiveness. It has served as a very powerful mobilising factor in contemporary conflicts. It's always been there; it's always been a reservoir that even the most unlikely characters could tap.

JOGTS: Maybe we need more studies of Christian Orthodoxy.

MS: You're absolutely right. I think perhaps the Christian tradition which is least understood in the West is Orthodoxy in all its forms, in its national forms. And I think this is one of the problems with the ecumenical movement post-Second World War, and perhaps this is a problem with the ecumenical and interfaith dialogue per se. Concerned people talk to each other, talk to like-minded people, but the question of religious identity, as opposed to theology

as understood in the academy, and understood in clergy circles (we might even say elite circles)—this idea of identity isn't really tapped or engaged with sufficiently.

This question of religion and national identity I came across when I worked for a time on the Troubles in Northern Ireland. I was teaching on this subject. The sense of Protestant identity felt in East Belfast was not the sense of Protestant identity felt by an assembly of more liberal and informed Protestant clergy, be they Presbyterian, Methodist or Church of Ireland. There was something qualitatively different, about that sense of identity and belonging, between clergy and laity.

The identity that's being stirred by Putin at present has little to do with the world of inter-church dialogue. It has an awful lot to do with the sense of "Holy Mother Russia," the distinctiveness of Orthodoxy, the felonious—the suspect—nature of other traditions (be they Catholic or Protestant), the sense of Orthodoxy rooted in a belief of the exceptional quality of Orthodox Russia, and the hostility which other parts (even of the Christian world) have always manifested towards it.

Back to your question: we really do need to understand the more visceral aspects of religion and religious identity on the ground in Russia. It's not adequately studied at present. We have to name the uglier aspects of traditions with which we engage and, indeed, of our own tradition.

JOGTS: And it would seem that the Soviet washing of Russian Christian Orthodoxy during the Cold War led the US not to study it very much at all.

MS: In the US, perhaps more so even than in the UK, the First Amendment and the tendency to try and sidestep religious concerns, and to use [religion] for propaganda purposes, but also treat it in a very ginger sort of fashion, led to this. With Afghanistan, the US State Department tries to reduce everything to a question of economic development and had a reluctance to engage with the particular religious culture, the ecology of that religious culture on the ground. This would require real study and understanding and empathy. In a secular governmental worldview, or the official separation of church and state, where people are being brought up to view the world or trained to see the world through a secular lens, this work is not done. I think this is wholly inadequate to understand the world in which we live, particularly after the Iranian Revolution and the politics of the Muslim world, et cetera.

And obviously, the politics of the Orthodox world has been reset with the rise of Putin. In making the appeal to fellow members of the Russian Orthodox Church, Putin employs his anti-Western rhetoric. He's also tapping into resentment in Serbia at the intervention of NATO in Kosovo, and the bombing of Serbia by NATO. These westerners, again, Putin can argue, are elbowing in and trampling over us and having no sense of our history or identity. Putin weaponised religious questions for the first anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine. The

Archbishop of Canterbury wrote a piece for the Daily Telegraph,² in which he said that Ukraine had to be supported militarily, and that Putin's invasion of Ukraine is an act of great evil.

So, there's been commentary from Anglican circles on Putin, but there's also been commentary from Putin on the Anglicans. Only last week, Putin referred to the divisions in the Anglican community over gay marriage, and the question, as Putin sees it, of a gender-neutral God. He has deployed this rhetoric and deployed this critique to rally conservative support among Christians in the majority world. And of course, one of the other aspects of Putin's religious policy, which we forget, is the way in which he has courted Muslim opinion in Russia, particularly in Chechnya. He sees himself as a religious conservative, and presents himself as a religious conservative who is opposed to innovation as he sees it in the West, behind whom believers in the majority world can rally, whether they are Christian or Muslim. He's played a very shrewd geopolitical religious game. And again, the fact that many of us have scarcely even registered or even recognised that is a reflection of how much we are locked into our own paradigms and locked into our own very limited horizons.

JOGTS: I had never put together Putin's bonding of the Muslim population and beliefs to the Christian. Certainly, in the Cold War, the US attempted to do that as well.

MS: You are right. He's flipped this. Although we are aware of the building of many, many new churches, many of them very grandiose, including a church (a cathedral, as I understand, dedicated to the military)—and this is not just the one in Kursk that I mentioned. He has also built mosques in Moscow, a particularly large one quite recently. Putin is reaching out to constituencies which you said the West played upon during the Cold War era. He understands the geo-strategic value of this; in many respects, Putin has turned the narrative. It's a fascinating subject; it's ominous because for many people in the West, the fact that Putin is courting religious opinion across many parts of the world, across religious divisions, might seem completely incidental to our understanding of the world, but I think that shows just how much we misunderstand the world in which we live, and the direction of global affairs.

JOGTS: Yes, Victor Orbán is using religion too in Hungary.

But I wanted to also go back to the end of World War II. We spoke about nuclear Armageddon. I'm always fascinated by Einstein and his religious beliefs. But what about the Jewish question? How does this fit in? In the US we now see conservative Christians bonding with the hard right and the conservative Jewish population. There was intense antisemitism in the US entering World War II, and then there's the shock of the Holocaust, then almost a double shock of nuclear Armageddon and the Holocaust. Could you discuss that a bit?

² Justin Welby, "Only by supporting Ukraine can we hope to build a lasting peace," *The Daily Telegraph*, February 23, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/23/supporting-ukraine-can-hope-build-lasting-peace/>.

MS: I'm not terribly familiar with the way in which the state of Israel and Jewish identity has played in global affairs. But in the British context, one of the pivotal moments was the history of the creation of the State of Israel. The history was the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The British government of the time tried to rally Jewish opinion across the world behind the Allied War effort. So again, we see the instrumentalisation of religious communities, widely dispersed religious communities—widely diffused, but influential religious communities. And the fact that the 1917 endorsement of a Zionist future for that corner of the world also was related to the recruitment of specifically Jewish units for the British Army. Jews from the United States, and indeed from across other parts of the world, actually joined those who were inspired by a Zionist vision, which the British government at that point seemed to underwrite.

What this feeds into are much bigger geo-strategic questions. One of the factors which made the West so supportive of Israel after independence, or after the creation of Israel, was the fact that the Soviets were really backing many of the Arab nations, such as Egypt under [Gamal Abdel] Nasser, Syria, et cetera. So, it was part of what you might call the Cold War proxy war between the great powers: Moscow and Washington.

JOGTS: I wanted to look at “the universality” of spiritual lives, versus an attachment to a specific religion. What is your understanding of the history of how particular pastors or religious people from a particular church or denomination work with people in warfare? Is there kind of a state of an emergency that brings together a universal spirituality that we can tap into? Or is that a global myth?

MS: It's a very interesting question. If we go back to the phenomenon of ecumenism (particularly in its emergence as an ecumenical movement in the 20th century), although certainly the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 has been seen as a major staging point in the rise of the ecumenical movement internationally, I would argue that conflict has always had a certain ecumenical dynamic, certainly in terms of my studies of Great Britain and the United States. It is surprising how differences dissipate when somebody else is actually shooting at you. And that ecumenical experience, that interfaith experience, was had by millions of people in Great Britain and the United States in the First World War, in the Second World War, and indeed in previous generations. One of the events in the religious history of Great Britain, which we'll be marking towards the end of this decade, is the bicentenary of the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, the granting of full political rights to Roman Catholics after centuries of proscription and, basically, second-class status.

There is an Irish nationalist myth, which turns on the idea that this is a result of campaigning by the Catholic Association led by Daniel O'Connell, the first mass movement that used protests and demonstrations in the 1820s. But for several decades prior to emancipation, the British Army had to recruit very heavily among Irish Catholics, because Britain was short of bodies to

fight its wars. And, essentially, if you had an army which by 1830 was approximately 40% composed of Irish Roman Catholics, you had to give a little.

There were military roots that broadened to political society in Great Britain and the growing acceptance of Roman Catholics in British political life and British society. And again, that's an inconvenient narrative for many people because it cuts against an Irish nationalist narrative. It sees religious toleration as rooted in conflict, which is an awkward equation. But if you look forward to the First World War in Great Britain, and you look at the way in which chaplains of all traditions cooperated... I'm not trying to paint a rosy picture: there were tensions; there were conflicts. But nonetheless, the idea of rubbing along together, because also the military authorities required you to, that's an important incentive in and of itself. But the other fact—you mentioned the American case—is, with the Second World War, the celebration of the fruition, the flowering and the flourishing of “Tri-Faith America,” in the context of the US armed forces. This is the idea that Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, to use that tripartite division, popularised in the 1950s, could serve together in huge numbers to combat a common enemy—Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan—could suffer together and could actually see just how relatively small their differences were on certain levels. They did not show the narcissism of minor differences.

You discovered the fact that you had far more in common with the people next to you than you had appreciated in civilian life, which was often polarised in religious terms. You were being looked after according to practice in the US Army and Navy by a chaplain of a completely different tradition. He was your chaplain, and you would likely form some kind of rapport with him.³ That practical ecumenism has been underplayed in the history of the ecumenical movement. Rooted in conflict at the grassroots level is something which is uncomfortable for the history of that movement, but I think it's something which should be recognised.

JOGTS: Turning specifically to your book *God and Uncle Sam*,⁴ you argue vehemently against standard separation of church and state tropes. Would you expand on that?

MS: One of the key things about the separation of church and state, the idea of the First Amendment, is that it has often been more notional than real. We saw in the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was an Episcopalian brought up in a world of Anglophilia, that there was an English influence on American Episcopalianism, which was reflected in the attitudes and outlook of Roosevelt himself. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Episcopal Church was seeking to be the first among America's churches. The building of the Episcopal Washington Cathedral with the support of Congress is a slightly odd phenomenon if you follow the First

³ Professor Snape added that he used the term “he” advisedly because of the all-male chaplaincy service.

⁴ Michael Snape, *God and Uncle Sam: Religion and America's Armed Forces in World War II* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2015).

Amendment. That kind of blurring of the lines is very common among American Episcopalians of Roosevelt's generation.

Roosevelt as president and Commander in Chief was very keen on further blurring these lines by the massive provision for religion through the US armed forces. The administration built hundreds of chapels, purpose-built chapels, which had never existed before for the US military; distributed Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish scripture to GIs, et cetera; offered a super abundance of chaplains provided by the US military for the care of its soldiers, for its care of its men and women. And again, one of the people who was complicit in this was General George C. Marshall, another Episcopalian. So essentially, you had particular individuals in powerful positions who were brought up in a particular religion with a particular view of the way in which the state should relate to the church.

And there's more of a Church of England colouring to Episcopalianism at this time, a kind of quasi establishment feeling, which does affect military policy. There was a Cadet Chapel at the Naval Academy at Annapolis and a Cadet Chapel at West Point, until the middle years of the 20th century, which was very Episcopalian. In fact, there was a bit of an Episcopalian stranglehold on the chaplaincy at West Point. In the 1960s, Morris Janowitz undertook a very interesting survey whereby he established that 50% of America's generals and admirals since 1890 were Episcopalians, and yet Episcopalians represented only 1% or 2% of the US population.⁵ So, when writing *God and Uncle Sam*, I was fascinated by how much a particular church with its ethos and traditions had infiltrated the American military and government establishment, and how people of that Episcopalian background were able to shape policy in a society in which, constitutionally, church and state were meant to be separate. American secularist groups that challenged this in the 1940s got absolutely nowhere because the nation was at war. Millions of men and women were overseas, hundreds of thousands dying. It wasn't the time to have this kind of conversation.

It's a fascinating picture. I think had Roosevelt not been Episcopalian, had he not been so pro-British—he was even accused of speaking with an affected English accent—[America's] war entry would have been different. France was defeated in 1940, and Britain stood alone, and Lend-Lease was a hot-button issue in the United States. Roosevelt was personally committed to supporting Great Britain as a Christian democracy and also, historically, a predominantly Anglican country. I think that that factored into his considerations.

If you look at the Placentia Bay meeting of August 1941, when Churchill met Roosevelt on the deck of the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales*, in the famous footage of them they're actually attending a naval service at which British sailors and American sailors and Marines are present.⁶

⁵ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: The Free Press, 1960).

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqfHbu6o7HU>

It's an Anglican service presided over by a New Zealand chaplain. They sing, "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past". From an Anglican stable, they sing, "Onward Christian Soldiers," and basically, they represent to the world—this is for world consumption—a sense of democratic and Christian solidarity, but also one which is very subtly and very significantly Anglican.

JOGTS: That's fascinating. This also involved the elites of the US and the financiers, philanthropists.

MS: Absolutely, and JP Morgan and all of this sort of thing. The shadow establishment, if you will, of Episcopalianism in early 20th century America was strong. I don't think that's really been engaged with by religious historians to the extent that it might be.

JOGTS: In terms of your writing and your research, you've got such an incredible command of sources and access to documents and people, and what they've said. Can you talk about your use of archives and sources and the differences between the US and the UK sources?

MS: Sources? That's a very interesting question. One of the things I've discovered during COVID, but was aware of before then, is how much better libraries and archives in the United States are, as a rule, in terms of making their collections available. Far more in the US had been digitised. The Imperial War Museum [in the UK], which I think is one of the prime archives on the study of conflict and war, has quite a lot of religious content in its collections. It's making a determined effort to digitise its collections, but it's not gone quite as far as the United States or Australia. I think the larger the country, the more scattered your potential users are, and perhaps the greater the perceived need to make that material available. We're very London-centric in Britain, and certainly the idea that you just have to jump on a train and go down and look at the London archives, that's only slowly shifting.

I was brought up in the school of the social history of religion. To a certain extent, British collections—not only the Imperial War Museum collections, but also the Liddle Collection [at the University of Leeds]—seem to be more geared towards that approach to history than the American collections are. In Britain, there was—I think—an earlier push to democratise the history of these conflicts and to make those sources available. That's my impression. I didn't come across an archive like the Imperial War Museum, which had literally the materials of thousands and thousands of people from all sorts of backgrounds, so readily accessible in a US context.

JOGTS: It goes right to E.P. Thompson, social history, and questions of where people put things.

MS: Absolutely. And how things are catalogued, as well. Anybody who's considering writing about chaplaincy (and obviously it does feature in the history of the religious experience in the military!) will find that the National Archives in the United States have done a much better job at concentrating chaplaincy records than have the British. To write a history of the [British] Royal

Air Force or Royal Naval chaplaincy is extremely difficult because the materials are scattered, when indeed they even exist. In actual fact, assembling and mapping and identifying the sources even for Army chaplaincy in the UK has been a bit of a jigsaw puzzle. And we know a lot more about where these sources lie now than we did twenty years ago, because there seemed to be a void, to be quite honest. Whereas if you went to the National Archives in College Park, Maryland [NARA II], you'll get the chaplain records for the US in bulk: metres and metres and metres and metres of the stuff. And so, I think that's another contrast: in terms of the retention of official records, institutional records on that level, I think the US is better than the UK. So, it's an odd picture of convergence and divergence in that regard.

JOGTS: I'll just ask the final question, which is, what have we missed? What would you like to say?

MS: Maybe something more about memorialisation, the subject area with which others and I have been engaged for more than twenty years now. The topic has had to struggle to find recognition, although it's an elephant in the room. Although the religious dimensions of conflict are perennial and almost universal—whether it's the sixteenth century or whether it's the early-twenty-first century—you'll find this material, you'll find its significance.

If you go into not only major Anglican or Church of Scotland churches in England and Scotland, or Church of Ireland churches in Ireland, you'll find so many of them have many military memorials. The major churches will have military chapels. But this aspect of these faith communities' history, their traditions, their formative influence... despite the fact that they are so visible, so obvious, they are so little studied. They're considered incidental details; they're pushed to one side. Their study would help faith communities to really understand the significance and the formative influence of conflict in their history. I think it's worthwhile. There's so much to be engaged with. And I think also one has to avoid what one great historian said about the great condescension we can show to our past. It's very easy, particularly in the study of the history of conflict and the churches to point a finger at certain individuals and say, "You made a wrong call then," as it were. But I've never been convinced that we're necessarily more enlightened when it comes to judging our contemporary situation than those individuals in the First World War and Second World War. Posterity, I think—I'm sure—will point an accusatory finger at us. We need to be a little more humble in viewing our subjects and understanding the situations that they were placed in.

JOGTS: Thank you very much.

A Child of the Father of Lies

A sermon given by Professor Cyril Hovorun at the University Church of St Mary the Virgin (Oxford, England) on 26 March 2023

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Since the war in Ukraine escalated in February 2022, it has become obvious that what Vladimir Putin and his mouthpieces, including those among the church hierarchs, propagate as the reasons for waging it, are, in fact, pretexts for an unspoken agenda. The true reasons are usually not admitted or articulated publicly. It is our task, as theologians and scholars in other disciplines, to expose them. These reasons include an unbridled, post-Soviet revanchism, the megalomaniac idea of superiority, and the urgent necessity to preserve autocracy and kleptocracy in Russia, which serve the privileged few. What follows is an analysis of the war's pretexts.

1. The first one is fighting "Nazism." Russian propaganda accuses Ukraine of being a "neo-Nazi" state. This state, however, has the only Jewish president outside Israel. Ukrainian Jews suffer with the rest of the country from the Russian bombardments and fight together with other Ukrainians on the frontlines against the Russian aggressors. All leaders of Jewish communities unanimously condemn these aggressors—for example, in the framework of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations. At the same time, the chief rabbi of Moscow, Pinchas Goldschmidt, had to flee Russia in March of last year, after he denounced the war. He explained his decisions on Twitter: "I could not remain silent, viewing so much human suffering, I went to assist the refugees in Eastern Europe and spoke out against the war." Now he is the President of the Conference of European Rabbis and continues to condemn the Russian aggression. The Russian state, which claims to fight fascism and Nazism, has itself become the Mussolinian *lo stato totale*, whose *modus operandi* is the Goebbelsian *der totale Krieg*.



2. The second pretext: Fighting “Russophobia.” According to Russian propaganda, “Russophobia” is the fear of everything Russian. It has allegedly engulfed “the West” and reached its historic



Figure 1. The cross that commemorates the victims of Baturyn massacre. Photo by the author.

maximum in Ukraine. Indeed, the Ukrainians had many historical reasons to fear Russians, at least from the times of Peter I (1672–1725). In 1708, he burned down the capital of the Ukrainian state of that time, Baturyn, in the same way as Putin burned down Mariupol. The Russians then destroyed even the Ukrainian churches, although one of their alleged motivations was to defend Orthodoxy against the West—a pattern being repeated in our day. Not only the defenders of the city, but also thousands of civilians were killed in cold blood by the Russian troops.

According to the sources, the dead bodies of the defenders were crucified and sent down the river of Dnieper—to make other Ukrainians fear the Russians. Many of those Ukrainians who survived were brought against their will to build Peter’s new capital in the north. When you walk in the streets of St. Petersburg and enjoy the grandeur of its imperial architecture, remember that it is built literally on the bones of the enslaved Ukrainians who died there under harsh conditions. Katherine II (1729–1796) continued the

work of her grandfather-in-law in sowing fear among the Ukrainians. She destroyed the remains of the Ukrainian Cossack republic—the *Sich*—and enslaved those who had managed to remain free since the time of Peter.

In the nineteenth century, Russia became more civilised, and at the same time turned more imperial. Slavery was abolished there only in 1861. A Ukrainian Shakespeare, who articulated the quintessence of what it means to be Ukrainian in the language which continues to be the literary standard, Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861), was born a slave and bought out from slavery by his friends who admired his talent. This was the “springtime of nations” in Europe. Spring came to the Ukrainian nation as well. There was a revival of the Ukrainian language, literature, theatre, and identity. However, the Ukrainian people were soon severely oppressed by the imperial authorities. Proponents of the Ukrainian culture and identity, including Shevchenko, were arrested and exiled. Tsar Nicholas I Romanov (1796–1855) in his own handwriting prohibited Shevchenko to write and paint, even for his private use. The Romanov empire became a prison

for the Ukrainian nation, together with the other nations it had colonised across Europe and Asia.

The “prison of the nations” was an expression that Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) applied to the Russian empire. He promised to liberate these nations. Indeed, in the first years after the Bolshevik revolution, which toppled the Romanov dynasty in 1917, the Ukrainian people received a chance to have their own independent state. However, the Ukrainian republic lasted only until 1921, when it was destroyed by the Red Army. Many Ukrainians died at that time, while defending their country. There are again many parallels between then and now. Hopefully, this time we will survive as a nation, unlike what happened in 1921 and in the ensuing Soviet period. Although the Ukrainian culture and identity were tolerated in the early years of the Soviet Union, the situation changed under Joseph Stalin (1878–1953). After he became the sole ruler of the Soviet “empire,” he enforced Lenin’s policies of internationalism by destroying national cultures and identities. They were declared anti-proletarian and serving the interests of the global capital—similarly to how Putin declares the Ukrainian culture as anti-Russian and serving the “evil forces of the West.” As a result, the most prominent and promising Ukrainian writers, poets, playwrights, theatre directors, actors etc., ended up in Stalin’s prisons and concentration camps, where many of them perished. We in Ukraine call them the representatives of “the renaissance executed.”

Hundreds of thousands of faithful members of various Ukrainian churches were liquidated in different ways as well. Soviet Russia imposed atheism as its “established religion.” The Ukrainian religious landscape has been diverse since early modernity. Its diversity was conditioned and enhanced by the Ukrainian lands being positioned at the crossroads between East and West. Although Orthodoxy is its dominant tradition, other traditions found a home and flourished on Ukrainian lands, including Catholic, Reformed, Jewish, and Muslim. Under Stalin, all of these were persecuted.

After having eradicated the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the church, Stalin decided to break the backbone of the Ukrainian peasantry through an artificial famine, which we in Ukraine call Holodomor—literally “death by starvation.” From 3.5 to 7 million Ukrainians, primarily the vulnerable ones, such as children, women, and elderly, died of starvation. This happened in the years 1932–1933. Six years later, Communist Russia became an ally of Nazi Germany. Their alliance was sealed by the signing in 1939 of an agreement known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The two predatory regimes agreed to invade and divide Poland. Many Ukrainians then lived in its eastern part and found themselves under the Russian occupation after 1939. They soon experienced all the Soviet policies regarding culture, language, and religion. This happened in the same period when the people in the UK suffered from Stalin’s ally, Hitler, and his bombardments of their cities.

Stalin's alliance with Hitler did not last long, and one predator eventually attacked the other one. The Ukrainian people found themselves between the hammer and the anvil. Some sided with one of the invaders, and others resisted both. For example, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army fought both the Soviets and the Nazis, and continued fighting the Russian occupants even after Hitler was defeated. While the Soviet troops kept fighting pockets of resistance in the Ukrainian west, a new wave of famine came to the rest of Ukraine. The post-war Holodomor is a part of my own family's story. My great-grandmother, who had lost her husband to the Nazi occupants, survived after the war only because her son, my grandfather, was a student in the military academy in Moscow.

Every Ukrainian family has similar stories about its members who did or did not survive one or another wave of the Russian policies of extermination. Surprisingly, in most cases, such stories did not translate to Russophobia. According to the data of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, which has studied the attitude of the Ukrainians to the Russians since 2008, less than 10% had a negative attitude in the beginning of the studies. The situation dramatically changed in 2014, following the annexation of Crimea and the proxy war in Donbas. Then the negative attitude spiked to about 50%, and after that began gradually going down, to less than 30% in

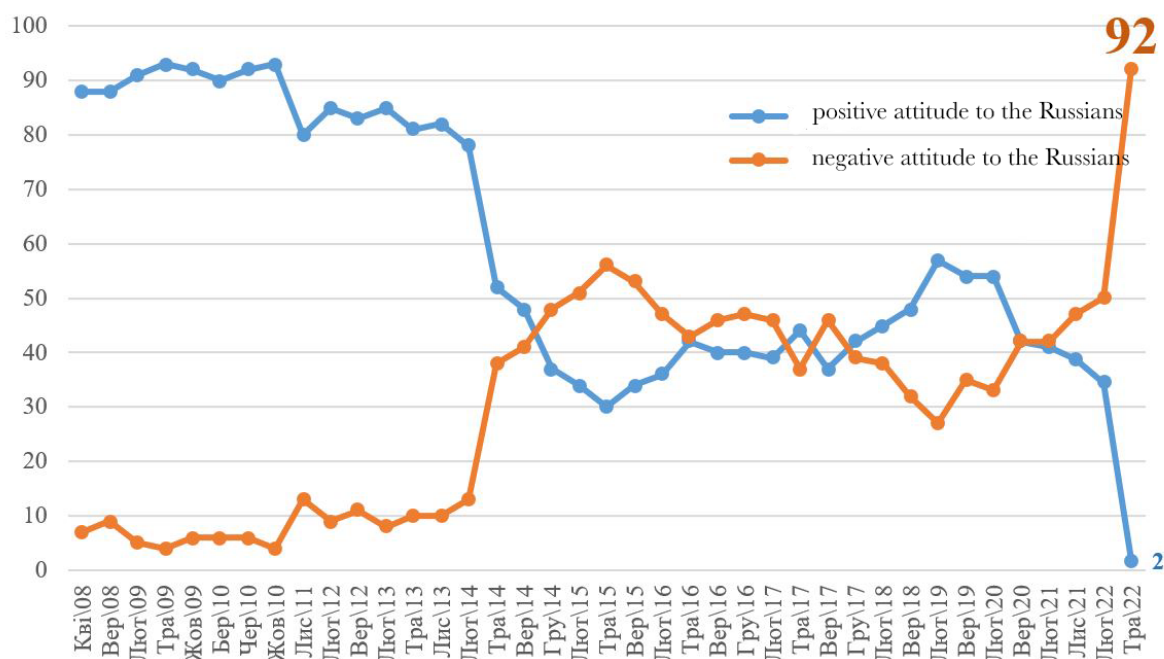


Figure 2. Positive and negative attitudes of the Ukrainians to the Russians from 2008 to 2022.

February 2019. Now the degree of “Russophobia” is the highest in the entire Ukrainian history, having reached above 90%. This is clearly the ironic result of Putin’s fighting “Russophobia.” No one else has contributed more to its rise than the Kremlin.

3. No one else has damaged the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine more, the protection of which Putin has alleged as his third pretext for the invasion. He claims that the Russian-speaking Ukrainians became oppressed as a result of the social transformations in the country, especially geared up by its two revolutions: The Orange one in 2004–2005 and the Euromaidan in 2013–2014. Many if not most Ukrainians are bilingual. In everyday life, many prefer to speak Russian, even though almost everyone can also speak Ukrainian. Many if not most participants in both Ukrainian revolutions were those bilinguals who preferred to speak Russian. What they were fighting for was not so much language or ethnic identity as transparency, social justice, and the rule of law. Putin perceives the latter values, and not the Ukrainian identity or language, as an existential threat to his regime. To put it simply, what he wants is to protect the corruption-based system he created, but he started a war on the pretext of protecting the Russian language in Ukraine. This war began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of two eastern Ukrainian regions, Donetsk and Luhansk, by the Russian troops camouflaged as local guerrillas. As a result of this war, a mass exodus of the Russian-speaking population began from the occupied areas. I remember well how in the Spring of 2014, the streets of Kyiv, where one often overheard Russian language, became even more Russian-speaking. The streets of Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities were literally flooded by those who tried to escape their so-called “liberators.” According to the report of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, one year of the Russian occupation of the Ukrainian east produced over one million one hundred thousand internally displaced persons and over seven hundred thousand refugees.

Most of these people were supposed to be protected by Putin, but in fact had to flee, trying to escape this so-called “protection.” Some of them had to leave their new homes again, when Russia started bombarding the entire country in February 2022. There are many stories similar to the one told by Andriy Shpygunov. He was born and lived all of his life in Crimea. He organised some Christian charities there, but then, in May 2014, had to escape the Russian occupation of the peninsula. His family settled in Irpen near Kyiv. In March 2022, their new home was destroyed by a Russian shell. Fortunately, they had left it by then, but they do not have a home to return to anymore. This is an example of the kind of people Putin wants to

5. Protecting Christianity became the fifth pretext for Putin's war. His propagandists already used this narrative, of protecting a Christian minority in the Middle East, when Russian airplanes bombarded Aleppo and other cities in Syria. Many Christians died then, along with many Muslims. The two religious groups, as a result, became alienated even further. Something similar is happening in Ukraine, where Putin claims to be protecting the Russian Orthodox Church. In January of this year, he even called a special session of the Security Council of the United Nations to raise his concerns. No one bought into his alleged concerns, but they further alienated the two Orthodox churches in Ukraine. The church that Putin calls "the Russian Orthodox Church" in Ukraine, denies being such, and claims to be independent from Moscow. Even those of its members who used to value their connection with Moscow, now try to hide it. Moreover, most churches and religious sites destroyed in the war belonged to the Moscow Patriarchate.

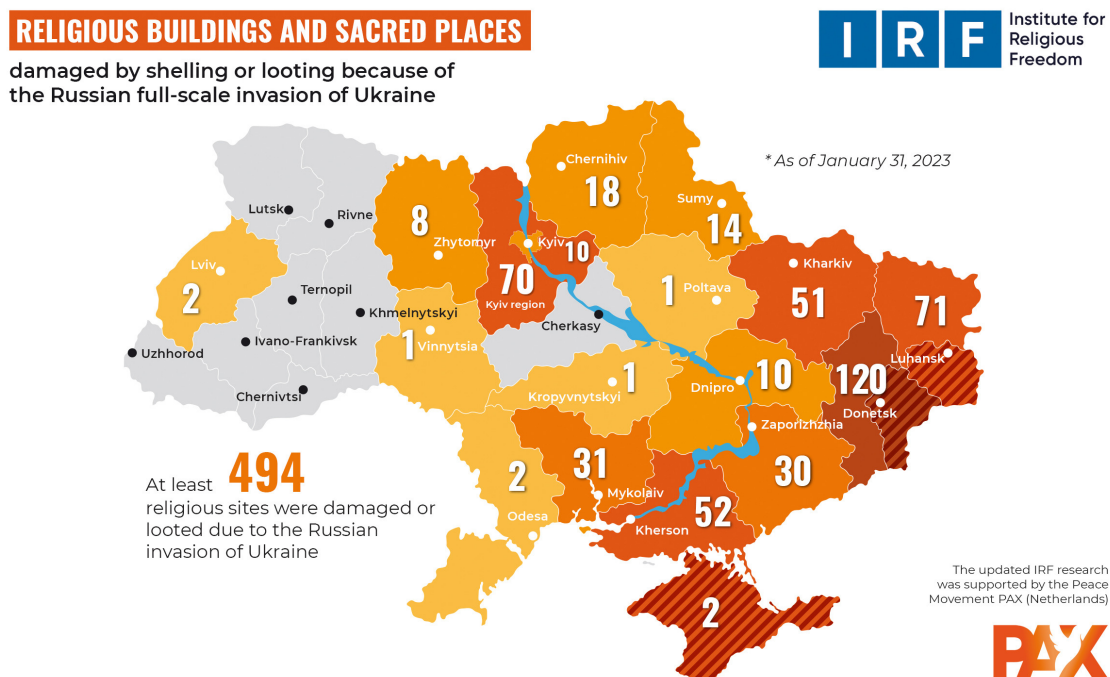


Figure 4. Religious buildings and sacred sites damaged as a result of shelling or military-related looting because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Institute of Religious Freedom).

Even those members of the Moscow Patriarchate who were Putin's supporters fall prey to the aggression he has unleashed. I personally knew a priest, Fr. Vladimir Bormashev, who was a zealous Russian patriot. He was a professor at the Kyiv Theological Academy and a priest of a community in Irpen. In the first days of the invasion, he tried to escape the bombardments. Like many others, he could not and was hit by a Russian shell. He died from his wounds in March 2022. Or another example. In the east of Ukraine there is a monastery of St. Nicholas and St. Basil, which was founded by a priest-monk, Zosima Sokur (1944–2002). He was reputed to be

the spiritual father of the ousted Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich, whose authoritarianism triggered the Euromaidan in 2013. Fr. Zosima was also a fervent supporter of the unity between Ukraine and Russia and developed an ideology coherent with Putin's propaganda. The latter sometimes uses the former. That is to say, propaganda sometimes exploits ideology to its own ends. This monastery was shelled and partially destroyed, as the Russian troops advanced into this area. Some monks were killed. Zosima's grave has been damaged. I do not mention these cases to point out that proponents of the "Russian world" have unwittingly reaped what they sowed. I want to say that Putin tends repeatedly to destroy everything and everyone he claims to care about.

6. This also applies to the sixth pretext of Putin's war—the so-called "traditional values." This idiom was coined in the period when religion was persecuted behind the Iron Curtain and shunned in Western societies. Sociologists of religion, such as Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), used this phrase to distil from religion a secular moralistic substrate, as it were, to make religion somehow relevant to contemporary society. Thus, this phrase in its original meaning was a symbol of compromise between religion and secularism in the West. In post-secular Russia, this phrase was paradoxically turned into a symbol of the struggle against the ostensibly "secular" West. Moreover, Putin weaponised the notion of "traditional values." As with his other weapons in his corrupt and dysfunctional armies, this intended weapon of Russia's supposed "traditional values" has been discredited. Indeed, which of these values have not been violated by Putin and his troops? Let us assess this violation against the ten commandments (Exodus 20:3–17):

(i) *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."*

(ii) *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."*

(iii) *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."*

The "Russian world" is about worshipping—worshipping *this* world. It places "Fatherland" before the Father. Putin himself suggested this when he addressed a crowd in Moscow on 22 February 2023. With reference to "the Fatherland," he claimed that this word "features something powerful, huge, I would say mystical and holy. It's not a coincidence that one of the most known prayers begins with 'Our Father.'" The "Russian world" worships "the Fatherland" and is based on what is called "political religion." This is a sort of religion that substitutes religion proper with ideologies and acts coercively. All political religions are coercive and idolatrous. The deities worshipped in the political religion of the "Russian world" are particularly bloodthirsty, demanding ever more human sacrifices, both of Russia's neighbours and of Russians themselves.

(iv) *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."*

Before Christmas of this year, the Patriarch of Moscow Kirill and Vladimir Putin came up with an initiative to cease fire to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord. This initiative was hypocritical *per se*, as if it is alright to kill when it is not Christmas or some other holiday. However, the Russian troops did not stop killing even on those days. They shelled mines on 7 January, when the Orthodox in Russia and Ukraine celebrated the Nativity, and killed a civilian in the Kharkiv region.

(v) “Honour thy father and thy mother.”

A part of the mythology that Putin propagates refers to Kyiv as the “mother” of the Russian cities. He dishonours Kyiv and many other cities and villages in Ukraine by besieging, bombarding, and destroying them.

(vi) “Thou shalt not kill.”

According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the war that Putin started has claimed over three thousand civilian casualties in 2014–2015 and over eight thousand after the war escalated in February 2022. These casualties include about 500 children.

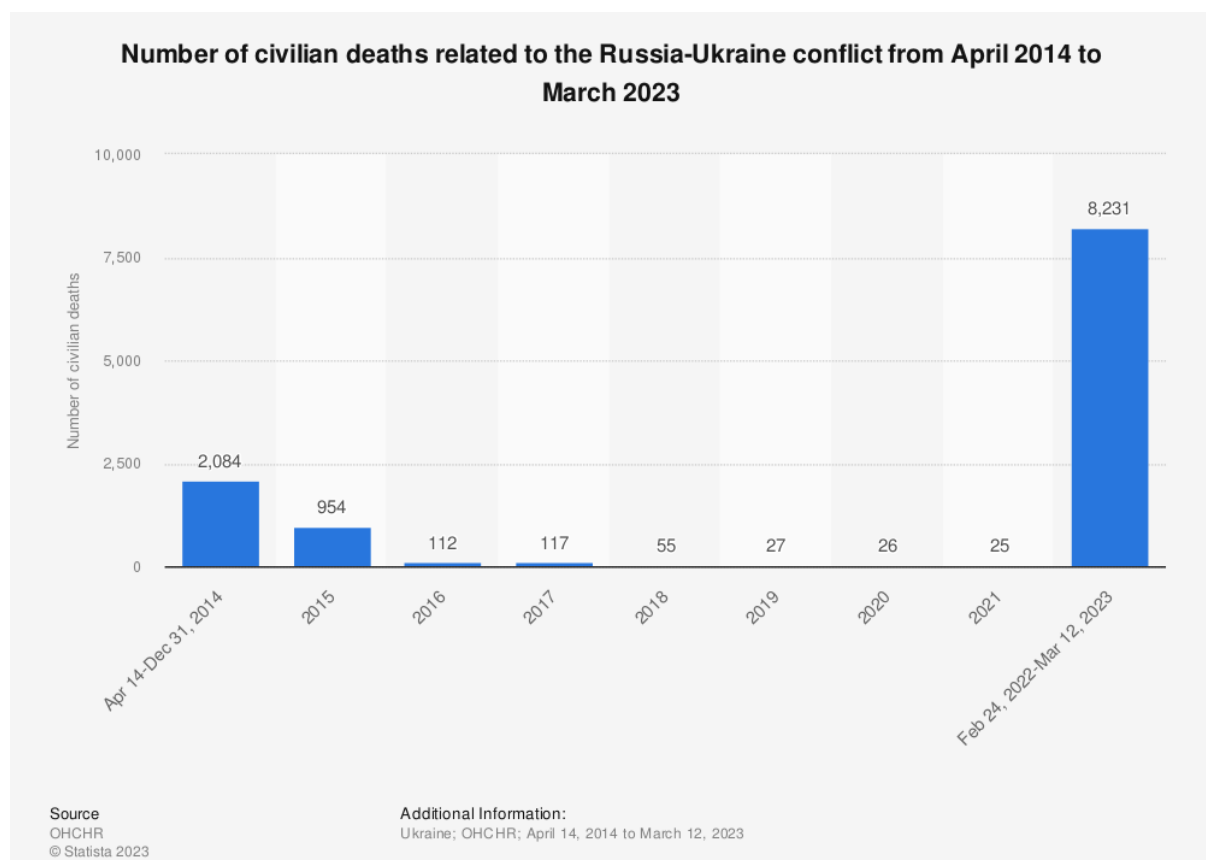


Figure 5. Number of civilian deaths related to the Russian-Ukraine conflict from April 2014 to March 2023 (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights).

(vii) *"Thou shalt not commit adultery."*

Adultery became an intrinsic part of Putin's war. In the words of the UN special representative on sexual violence Pramila Patten, "When women are held for days and raped, when you start to rape little boys and men, when you see a series of genital mutilations, when you hear women testify about Russian soldiers equipped with Viagra, it's clearly a military strategy." She added: "And when the victims report what was said during the rapes, it is clearly a deliberate tactic to dehumanise the victims." According to Patten's office, "more than a hundred cases" of rape or sexual assault have been registered since February 2022. And this is just "the tip of the iceberg," in her words. The age of the victims varies from four to 82 years old; they are mostly women and girls, but also men and boys.

(viii) *"Thou shalt not steal."*

In this war, both the Russian state and its soldiers steal on a gigantic scale. The state steals everything from children to grain. Over sixteen thousand children have been deported or, in other words, stolen from Ukraine by Russia. Many of them were separated from their parents without their consent. For this reason, the International Criminal Court issued on 17 March an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin and the commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the Russian President, Maria Lvova-Belova. While the Russian state steals on a national scale, its soldiers do the same at the level of households. They loot them and steal from them everything they can carry: From washing machines to toilets. One hopes there will be justice served for such cases as well.

(ix) *"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."*

The war is driven by false witnesses presented by Russian propaganda. In 2014, the central, state-sponsored Russian TV channels broadcasted a story about a three-year old boy who was allegedly crucified by the Ukrainian troops who regained the eastern city of Sloviansk after its short Russian occupation. This story caused outrage in Russian society but was later proven as completely fabricated. In 2022, the Russian aggression escalated on the basis of another false witness—about the Ukrainian troops allegedly preparing to invade Russia. Every aspect of this war is driven by false witnesses, which bluntly violate God's commandment. This reminds me of another scriptural dictum: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). In this dictum, murder and lies are intrinsically connected—as they are in Russia's war against Ukraine.

(x) *"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."*

As of March 2023, the office of the prosecutor general of Ukraine has registered about 75 thousand crimes that violate this commandment. This is only a part of all violations committed. As the war continues, tragically there will be more crimes against humanity and individual human beings in Ukraine. One hopes, justice will be eventually served for all of them.

7. I would conclude with a final, seventh, charge against Putin—of distorting the tradition that he pretends to protect and associates himself with. The more he struggles to explain the war to himself and to the Russian people rationally, the more he develops irrational arguments. These arguments may sound theological, but they have little to do with theology proper. Here is an example. In his speech delivered on the occasion of the war's anniversary on 21 February, he addressed the debates within the Anglican Communion regarding what kind of language should be used for God. He gave his own “theological” answer to the questions raised in these debates. He said, and I quote: “The Anglican Church is considering a gender-neutral God. May God forgive them for they know not what they do.” Maybe his intention was different, but what he actually did was to affirm that God has gender. This statement is as clumsy as the one Putin made on another occasion, on which he stated that Orthodox Christianity is closer to Islam than to the Western Christian traditions.

Even Joseph Stalin, who studied theology in a seminary and had opinions about many fields of knowledge, did not utter a single one on theology. Putin, as distinct from Stalin, did not study theology but follows Stalin as his role-model, and yet does not hesitate to opine on theological matters. His sort of “service” to theology and the Orthodox tradition is as destructive as his rapacious “service” to Russia and its long-suffering neighbours.

Religion as a Weapon: United States Radio and the Cold War

An Interview with Mark G. Pomar, author of *Cold War Radio: The Russian Broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*

Mark G. Pomar

Former Assistant Director, Russian Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), former Director of the USSR Division of Voice of America (VOA), and former Executive Director of the Board for International Broadcasting

Abstract

The following is an interview hosted by the *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* (JOGTS) with Mark G. Pomar in June 2023. We discussed Mark's extensive experiences interacting with Soviet media during his time as Assistant Director of the RFE/RL 1982–1993, experiences which culminated in his recent book: *Cold War Radio* (Lincoln: Potomac Books/University of Nebraska Press, 2022). The interview was conducted by Victoria Phillips.

Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society (JOGTS): Thank you for joining us. Let's begin with some background. Simply put, why radio?

Mark Pomar (MP): First and foremost, Soviet media were under the full control of the government. All national, local, and regional media reported directly to the same Kremlin officials. So, when we sat down at our daily morning meeting at the Munich headquarters of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the first question we would ask was: "Is there an important event that the Soviet Union is either distorting or ignoring?" And that would often be our lead story.

Generally, we faced two different types of subjects: Ones that were always ignored for ideological reasons and others that were topical, usually relating to a recent event. For example, there would be a Soviet airplane crash and the Soviet media would not report on it. Of course,



Mark G. Pomar, "Religion as a Weapon," *JOGTS* 4 (2023), pp. 56–60.

the rest of the world media would report on the crash, but the Soviet media remained silent. That would be a topical story of the day, and Voice of America (VOA) and RFE/RL would report the crash, citing the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* or the news wires. We would often do a press round-up at the end of the broadcast day, citing what the American, British, French, German, and Italian mainstream news outlets were reporting about Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Our aim was to give Soviet listeners a general sense of how Europe and the US were viewing current events.

Along with topical stories, we had what I would call “perennial issues that challenged Soviet ideology.” Often, they were distortions of historical events. For example, the famine in Ukraine in the 1930s was a subject that the Soviet Union avoided or, when pressed to comment, would blatantly deny the very existence of the famine. And for that reason, RFE/RL would report on the famine from time and time, especially if there was an academic conference devoted to this issue or the publication of an important book. Other examples of historical programming would include the Soviet terror of the 1930s, World War II, or the roots of the Cold War. With so many historical issues either ignored or distorted in the Soviet press, we had a field day preparing our programs.

JOGTS: Why religion?

MP: I’d think of this in three broad terms. First, among the major subjects ignored or distorted in the Soviet Union was religion. Kremlin propagandists considered religion a principal enemy, inimical to Soviet values and Marxist ideology. So, for us, religion became a major topic, and we would have extensive reports on practiced rituals, sermons by prominent clerics, as well as discussions of theological ideas and philosophy.

The Soviet press regularly attacked VOA and RFE/RL, most often accusing us of leading Soviet youth astray through religious programming. For us, that was proof that our broadcasts were indeed having an effect. For many Soviet ideologues, religion was the key battlefield of the Cold War.

“The Battle of Ideas” is a popular concept in Cold War studies. Certainly, the opposition of capitalism and socialism was central to the Cold War struggle, but that struggle went deeper, touching one’s core values and beliefs. This meant, above all, human rights, your personal freedom, your unique independent voice, and your very sense of reality. After all, Soviet totalitarianism sought to control not only your actions but your inner thoughts. And for that reason, religious programming to the Soviet Union took on special meaning.

From the very beginning both RFE/RL and VOA broadcast sermons by noted Eastern Orthodox clerics and even entire religious services, primarily because Orthodoxy was the major historical religion of Russia as well as that of Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia. It is noteworthy that

these broadcasts were not ecumenical but intended for co-religionists. To broaden the scope of the programming, Radio Liberty introduced weekly religious programs for interested but sceptical listeners in the Soviet Union. Led by the Reverend Alexander Schmemmann who taught at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, it explained how integral Christianity was to the development of Russian culture, literature, and philosophy. Without understanding the basics of Christianity, for example, one could hardly make sense of Dostoevsky or even Pushkin.

Although the official voice of the US government, VOA also had religious programming similar to those at Radio Liberty. Despite the separation of church and state, VOA broadcast Orthodox services and invited theologians to discuss religious concepts. The Russian Service even hired an Orthodox priest, the Reverend Victor Potapov, to anchor the religious broadcasts.

In the 1970s, under pressure from the West, the Soviet authorities began allowing the emigration of Jews. Realizing the need to address the concerns of Jews in the Soviet Union, both VOA and Radio Liberty introduced Jewish programs, modelling them on the Christian Orthodox programs. Jewish rabbis spoke about the traditions, rituals, songs, and values of Judaism. These programs were of such high quality that a major Jewish organization in New Jersey honoured VOA in 1985 with its annual human rights award.

To be fair, some of the religious programs, especially at Radio Liberty, occasionally veered into Russian nationalism. One prominent example that I describe in my book is a series of programs about the thousandth anniversary year of Christianity in Russia (1988). With the full endorsement of senior RFE/RL management, RL devoted hours of airtime each day to this commemoration, becoming in effect a religious broadcaster.

The key problem with the broadcasts was the presentation of the baptism of Kyivan Rus as strictly a “Russian” historical event, ignoring the fact that the leader of Kyivan Rus—Waldemar (c. 958–1015)—was a Viking. Furthermore, the program completely ignored the fact that the Kyivan Rus state was the founding state of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. In time, the name, Waldemar, became “Vladimir” in Russia and “Volodomyr” in Ukraine, but whatever the case he was not a “Russian Prince” as presented in the Russian broadcasts.

Such blatant nationalist views engendered criticism, most prominently from a well-known human rights leader, Ludmila Alexeyeva. Her main point was that these programs were not so much about religion as they were about “age-old Russian imperialism under the guise of religion.”

Second, Cold War endings. Gorbachev’s glasnost had a profound effect on the Russian broadcasts of both VOA and RFE/RL, which I describe in detail in my book. In 1988, all jamming of our broadcasts ceased and, in 1989, we were able to open bureaus in Moscow. Soviet citizens could now participate in our broadcasts, and we could interview leading Soviet politicians

and cultural figures. In these remarkably freer times, religion ceased to be a taboo subject. Religious programs, on a much smaller scale, continued but they lost the taint of the forbidden.

As a matter of fact, there was a craze in the late eighties of baptisms in the Soviet Union. People told me that they primarily sought out baptisms to show that they were now Russians, Ukrainians, or Belarussians, and no longer just “Soviet.” It is worth noting that the Soviet Union aimed to create Soviet people—the Soviet man and Soviet woman—and not Russians, Ukrainians, or Kazakhs. Now Soviet people were free to choose their identity and, for many, being baptized was the expression of personal agency.

Once the Soviet Union fell apart in late 1991, religious programs were phased out at VOA and RFE/RL. With complete freedom of religion, it made little sense to continue these programs. Indeed, now people find it odd that we had so many religious programs but during the Cold War they were an important part of our overall strategy.

Finally, third, the twenty-first century and the question of whose weapon? One could look at the religious programs of the 1980s and see the roots of Putin’s Russia. During the Cold War, the Munich headquarters of RFE/RL was a kind of microcosm of all Russian political movements, from left to right. We had a few people who were still looking for Leninist democracy as well as liberals who embodied Western values. But there was also a far-right group that was centred on religion. At times, their religious zeal acquired strong imperial tendencies, a phenomenon we see today in Russia’s brutal war against Ukraine.

JOGTS: So how does that reconcile with, or does it reconcile with, the Cold War religious programming? In other words, was there some claim not only to nationalism, but some idea of “universal” ethics promoted by the radios: “Do unto others,” or something like that?

MP: There was clearly an entire gamut of religious programs, ranging from the liberal, ecumenical tone of the Rev. Schmemmann’s programs to the aggressively nationalist tone of the programs devoted to the thousandth anniversary of Christianity in Kyivan Rus.

What’s remarkable is that tens of thousands of RFE/RL programs are now accessible online through the Open Society archives and scholars can access those broadcasts and determine how effective they were.

JOGTS: Has today’s post-Cold War regime hijacked religion and the church?

MP: Perhaps a story may best illustrate this. When I joined RFE/RL in 1982, I tried to get to know some of the older Russian editors. I recall having lunch with several of them and I started telling them what I had heard in a Washington briefing, primarily how the Reagan administration saw Russians as victims of communism, no less than Poles, Hungarians, or Ukrainians. Well, according to Reagan’s advisers, the best way of reaching Russians was by helping them to

restore their culture, identity, and religion. As I was describing this approach, I could see scowls on the faces of the editors. Finally, one editor told me: "Listen, you naïve Americans, don't you understand that communism is dying. Nobody in the Soviet Union will fight and die for communism and no one cares about Africa or world communism. But Russian nationalism, deeply embedded in Orthodoxy, is growing in the Soviet Union, especially in the military and the KGB. And, you Americans will rue the day, when Soviet practice merges with age-old Russian imperialism."

They were talking about the threat of Russian nationalism. And of course, several years later, how did the Soviet Union fall apart? It rotted from inside. No one supported communism. And now we see the full expression of Russian imperialism. And, unfortunately, the Russian Orthodox Church, hounded by the Soviet authorities for decades, now occupies a vaunted position in Russian society and is the true handmaiden of the State.

JOGTS: What is next for you?

MP: I am interested in writing another book about RFE/RL, this time focusing on the non-Russian broadcasts. The US was the only major country to fund programs in Ukrainian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Georgian, Armenian, and many other languages. This is a story that needs to be told and will contribute to the "decolonizing" of Russian studies. That is now an important concept in western scholarship, and I am eager to make a contribution to that effort.

JOGTS: Well, that's a fabulous place to end.

MP: I enjoyed it. Great fun.

Review of Bradley Onishi, *Preparing for War: the extremist history of White Christian nationalism—and what comes next* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2023).

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Search #capitolsiegereligion and you'll find stark evidence that the siege of the US Capitol on 6 January 2021 was a profoundly religious act. The hashtag, initiated by a curator of the Smithsonian, charts the Christian iconography, ritual, and language by which rally/riot attendees chose to identify themselves and their cause. In *Preparing for War*, scholar of religion Bradley Onishi explores the history of White Christian nationalism and anticipates where it's headed next. His claim is bold: the storming of the US Capitol "was not the last stand of a dying faction. It was the first violent battle in what they foresee as the coming civil war" (221).

Onishi begins by unpacking White Christian nationalism—what it is, the myths and narratives driving it, and its distinction from Black Christian nationalism—and outlines his own experience within the movement as a zealous teenage convert and youth leader.

Chapters 2–5 trace the development of White Christian nationalism and extreme right-wing politics from the 1960s American South. Onishi finds a direct antecedent of Donald Trump in Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee for the 1964 presidential election. Trump reads straight from Goldwater's playbook of anti-elitism, libertarianism, and isolationism, cultivating the same image of cavalier self-reliant manhood, if not quite his "cowboy mystique" (37). Goldwater's influence on the voting public was visible in the 70s and 80s as well. Whereas Jimmy Carter's personal ethic was demonstrably more "Christian" than Ronald Reagan's, the latter's Christian nationalist policies secured him wild popularity among Christian nationalist voters and a second term in office.

As early as the 1960s, the American Republican party recognised the enormous potential of the White Christian nationalist electorate. Political entrepreneurs like Paul Weyrich and Ricgard Viguerie cynically and coolly levelled their sights on White evangelicals. Drawing from sources as varied as court records and footage of political rallies, Onishi makes the case that Republican priorities often



Frazer MacDiarmid, 'Bradley Onishi, *Preparing for War*',
JOGTS 4 (2023), pp. 61–63.

thought of as theologically motivated—anti-abortionism, family values, tax breaks for Christian schools—are really driven by a White supremacist vision for a segregated, ‘pure’ American society. Big business also piggy-backed on conservative Christianity, whose prosperity gospel and “sacralization of the individual” (49) promoted the goods of capitalist consumerism and salvation through hard work. This is the most compelling aspect of *Preparing for War*—contextualising the siege of January 6th as the natural and even predictable result of socio-political wheels set in motion over 50 years ago.

Chapters 6–8 examines key features of the White Christian nationalist worldview. The imperative for ‘family values’ and the obsession with purity (particularly of the teenage body) is essentially a drive to purify a nation. James Dobson, founder of *Focus on the Family* and key exponent of the ‘family values’ movement, has uncomfortable links with eugenics, though Onishi leaves the reader to conclude whether resemblances are much more than accidental. Onishi’s confusion about whether he was praying *at* the US flagpole or *to* the flag as a teenager sparks discussion of why American ‘patriots’ are drawn to authoritarian leaders, be they Vladimir Putin or Donald Trump. Feeling their authority threatened, White Christian nationalists turn to conspiracy theories like QAnon to alter dominant narratives of truth and normativity.

The final three chapters reframe the storming of the Capitol as the first battle in MAGA nation’s war on American democracy. January 6th is a direct outworking of a conservative reading of Joshua 6, which recounts the Israelites’ divinely-sanctioned siege and massacre at the pagan city Jericho. The iconography and Christian paraphernalia at the siege is unmistakable: “White Christians saw themselves as warriors, protecting the nation” (171). The breach of the Capitol can be mythologised as a cleansing of the Temple, a religious ritual both transgressive and blessed by God. A woman killed during the siege has been cast as a martyr in the godly crusade to retake the country. A comparison with Hitler’s rise from a similar political moment underlines the perilousness of the situation.

Onishi concludes by considering the future. The exodus of White Christian nationalists to the American Redoubt (Idaho, Montana, Wyoming) may lay the ground for the next phase of White Christian nationalists’ war against American democracy. Onishi commits his book as a warning for the country to prepare for the coming civil war.

Onishi is not reticent about his allegiances. Indeed, his identity as a ‘former White Christian nationalist’ gives him an ‘insider’s view’ into the social phenomenon he sets out to analyse, while his profession as a “scholar of religion” (1) who “no longer identif[ies] as a Christian” gives him the tools to do so (12). His political persuasion is the subtext of the entire book: he feels “relieved or even buoyant” at the prospect of the Democrats controlling the White House and both houses of Congress (5),

while the Republican party is the pathology under examination. Arguably this candour is necessary for the author of a book so overtly political, but it may alienate some readers.

Onishi's Christian past is the thread that binds the book together. The question "Would I have been there?" is said to have inspired the book and returns to haunt the reader as it does the author himself. Anecdotes from his time as an evangelical are liberally scattered throughout the book, giving the writing immediacy and drive. Honing in on Orange County, Southern California (the birthplace of modern conservatism (58) and Onishi's childhood home) makes the weighty task Onishi sets himself more manageable and accessible.

However, familiarity breeds contempt, and one senses that the break from his faith community was not an altogether clean one. It's hard not to understand Onishi's narration of his journey as one from the primordial darkness of Christian nationalism to the rational light of agnostic multiculturalism. Perhaps this would have been softened if he had contrasted White Christian nationalism with other communities of faith. How did liberal strains of Christianity respond to January 6th? What about American Muslims?

I found Onishi's theological engagement with White Christian nationalism lacking. Many of the views Onishi mentions as problematic have solid biblical grounding. Biblical scholars would admit that Jesus was in many ways "an icon of insurrection" (7), both as a "historical" figure and in his portrayal in the gospels. To interpret calamity as God's punishment is fundamental to the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible, not just a Christian nationalist aberration. As jarring as it might be to secular ears, the idea that "our bodies are not our own" and "when you sin sexually, you misuse what is God's" (111) is thoroughly Pauline.

Onishi sometimes depends upon the reader's sympathy to see the obvious injustice or ridiculousness of Christian nationalist positions, rather than formulating real arguments against them. Why is "a vision of Christianity as a privatized, individualist endeavour" (51) somehow illegitimate, as Onishi leads us to believe? What about the prosperity gospel? Criticism of the behaviour of White Christian nationalists would have been strengthened by serious engagement with the beliefs that motivate them. Onishi briefly touches upon different interpretative lenses with which to read the Bible—literal versus allegorical—but his argument would have benefitted from at least a section devoted to this topic.

In little over 200 pages, Onishi takes the pulse and delivers a prognosis for a movement in modern America that cannot be ignored. *Preparing for War* provides the context that contemporary conversations about right-wing nationalism lack in an accessible and engaging manner.

Review of James C. Ungureanu, *Science, Religion, and the Protestant Tradition: Retracing the Origins of Conflict* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).

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Science and religion interact, according to the ‘conflict thesis,’ only as foes, invariably at odds with one another. The historical record, the thesis continues, bears this out, showing how religious institutions have always hampered reason’s scientific progress. James Ungureanu seeks in this work to reveal the origins of this conflict *thesis* (not, as a point of orientation, the causes of historical *conflicts* between science and religion). As Ungureanu documents in helpful detail, proponents of the conflict thesis had, and have, a clear opinion as to the historical causes of the perceived prolonged controversy—restrictive ecclesiastical authority, metaphysical accretion, imperial complicity, divisive theological disputes, the arrest of reason, and a vested interest of the Church in undermining intellectual and cultural progress. In its fullest articulation, the conflict thesis marshals these purported causes against not only a narrow dogmatism but religion altogether. Here, triumphant science must displace all religion. In this well-researched volume, written in lively prose, Ungureanu traces this unconvincing, though tenacious, thesis back to its source.

The author challenges a number of basic assumptions about the nineteenth-century origins of the science-religion conflict thesis, arguing, most importantly, that the infamous pair of John William Draper (1811-1882) and Andrew Dickson White (1832-1918), to whom the thesis is typically traced, “did not in fact posit an endemic and irrevocable conflict between ‘science and religion’” (13). A reading of their texts, Draper’s *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874) and White’s *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896), shows instead (the titles, Draper’s in particular, notwithstanding) that the two hoped their narratives would actually preserve religious belief. Science, in the views of Draper (physician at New York University) and White (historian and first president of Cornell University), could serve as an agent to reform, not remove, religion. Indeed, for both, science was secondary to the real issue,



Thomas Topel, ‘James Ungureanu, Science, Religion, Protestant Tradition’,
JOGTS 4 (2023), pp. 64–67.

namely, the discord between a more progressive and liberal Protestantism, which had their allegiance, and a more traditional, doctrinaire, and conservative Christianity.

Yet, for many historians of science, as Ungureanu rightly notes, the work of Draper and White still serves as the *locus classicus* of the conflict thesis, a view that, put simply, “is wrong,” says Ungureanu (24). While agreeing with the majority evaluation of historians that the conflict thesis (its content) has little if any historical basis, Ungureanu thinks that the consensus view (as to its origins) that insists that “Draper and White developed, defined, and defended the conflict thesis” (11) is a complete misunderstanding (107, 174). If the motivations of Draper and White have so often been misconstrued, this is largely due, Ungureanu argues, to the way in which their works were originally promoted and popularised by science editor Edward Livingston Youmans (1821–1887), who pressed into service the writings of White, Draper, and others in advocating for his vision of the religion of the future, which had to go beyond Protestantism, indeed, beyond all dogmatic traditions, to a scientific naturalism, the ‘cult of science’ in the later nineteenth century. “Youmans ultimately distorted, wittingly or unwittingly, the subtle distinctions between Draper, White, and their conceptions of the reconciliation between science and religion” (177).

Draper and White, Ungureanu contends, are not in fact the origin of the conflict thesis. Nor, he submits, is Youmans, who held that science would give new shape to religious belief (214). Beyond Youmans, the narratives of Draper and White were ultimately embraced by ‘freethinkers and atheists’ who used their works as a weapon against all religion. In particular, White’s writing became, “however inadvertently, one of the most effective and influential weapons of unbelief” (103). Both authors were “appropriated by secularists and atheists and promulgated at the end of the century without any of their nuances and subtleties. In the end, their narratives were taken out of context, reconstructed into positions they did not hold, and therefore ultimately transformed into something more equivalent to the modern understanding of the ‘conflict thesis’” (219).

Ungureanu thus pins the conflict thesis—the story of unremitting hostility between religion and science—on freethinkers and atheists at the end of the nineteenth century seeking to do away with religion altogether. However, he adds, this was only possible because of the rhetoric of reason and the reconstruction of history that goes back to the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation.

The Reformation, its spirit and themes, were extremely formative for both Draper and White. In this, they were but two voices among the vast majority of English and Americans who held, tacitly or explicitly, anti-Catholic sentiments in the Victorian period. Here, the Reformation,

viewed as a triumph over the Roman Church, was touted by Protestants as the sole source of political liberty, scientific advancement, and economic flourishing (106). In the two previous centuries, against the background of the 'Age of Discovery' and the spree of religious wars, there were efforts to resolve internal religious strife by allowing reason to be arbiter. The resulting 'reasonable' and 'essential' faith was combined, in the early nineteenth century, with science-oriented Protestant self-critiques which allowed more liberal circles to distinguish themselves from both mainstream Protestants and Catholics. One of Ungureanu's central claims emerges here: "The historical narratives of Draper and White have been misunderstood by historians of science largely because they have failed to put them within the context of this Protestant heritage" (107). Draper's rationalism was grounded upon English latitudinarian thought, while White's evolutionary theism was based on the German theological tradition (147). Draper's narrative was influenced by "reasonable" Protestantism, White's by Protestant romanticism and idealism (234).

The Reformation gave rise to a new historical consciousness. By gathering and employing historical evidence, theological criticism, and rational analysis, Protestant reformers enacted a new vision of history that rejected *traditio* and that served as a weapon against theological opponents. The emergence, with the Reformation, of this Protestant historiography became an essential feature of the history of science narratives found in writers like Draper and White. The advent of Protestantism precipitated a significant shift in the perception, investigation, and interpretation of the past. The reformers had recast the past in order to give historical legitimacy to their protest, and with this invented historiography there came about a fundamental and irrevocable shift in historical perception (106-111). "The Protestant Reformation," writes Ungureanu, "...had a tacit and perhaps even explicit role in creating the perception that science and religion were in conflict." In short, the "modern unbelief" of today's scientific culture "betrays roots to the Reformation" (172).

While variations of this thought are found already in Max Weber, Charles Taylor (*A Secular Age*), and more recently in Brad Gregory (*The Unintended Reformation*), Ungureanu insightfully adds to this picture the claim that it was a particular kind of religion, namely, liberal Protestantism, "that both subjected Christianity to rational criticism and subordinated it to experiential religion, which eventually gave birth to a conflict narrative that, in turn, enabled the rise of secularism" (173).

A few minor critiques: While Ungureanu's claims eventually make it through his enjoyable prose, some of the argumentation could be tighter. Similarly, several internal references (via pronouns) are unclear, slightly out of place, or delayed in their connections. At various points, important statements seem underdeveloped or unrelated to neighbouring sentences. On the whole, however, the book is highly recommended for both students and researchers seeking insights into

the origin of the conflict narrative—a story that, though its sweeping thesis is without historical basis, is not without historiographical precedence in its Reformation-like rhetorical strategy. Ungureanu's volume helpfully adds to one part of the complex and ongoing debate on science and secularization in today's world.