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Review Essay

Editor's Note

The editorial transition at the *Political Science Reviewer* continues. This is the final of three issues that were assembled, reviewed, and accepted for publication by the previous editorial team. Joseph T. Stuart (University of Mary) brought this issue together as Guest Editor. In addition, we are happy to include a review essay commissioned by the previous team that complements the symposium. The articles provided in these pages appear largely as they were bequeathed to us, save for the copyediting and compilation completed by the incoming editorial team.

For a final time, we thank Bruce Frohnen and Joe Devaney for working to keep the journal alive over the past several years. The efforts of the Editorial Board, but especially Lee Trepanier, are also owed a debt of gratitude. Likewise, we are grateful for the generous support of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, without which the *Political Science Reviewer* would not be possible.

Following this symposium, we are proud to move forward with new issues of the *Political Science Reviewer*. We aim to reinvigorate the journal by building on its tradition while incorporating our own editorial vision. Please visit our website, politicalsciencereviewer.wisc.edu, for our editorial statement, for subscription information, and how to submit articles for consideration.

Richard Avramenko
Incoming Editor-in-Chief

Notes on Contributors

Khalil M. Habib is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Pell Honors Program at Salve Regina University. He is coeditor, with Lee Trepanier, of *Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Globalization*. He also has published articles on Aristophanes, Ibn Khaldun, Tocqueville, and Machiavelli.

Glenn A. Moots is Professor of Political Science and Philosophy and Director of the Forum for Citizenship and Enterprise at Northwood University in Midland, Michigan. He was a William E. Simon Fellow in the James Madison Program at Princeton University in 2013-14. He is author of Politics Reformed: The Anglo-American Legacy of Covenant Theology (Missouri, 2010) and co-editor of Justifying Revolution: Law, Virtue, and Violence in the American War of Independence (Oklahoma, 2018). He has had essays on religion and politics published in various journals including American Political Thought, Locke Studies, and Humanitas.

Mattei Ion Radu, who passed away in 2010, was adjunct professor at Villanova University. He received his M.A. from the London School of Economics and his J.D. from Villanova University.

Gerald J. Russello is a practicing lawyer in New York City. He is the author of *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk* and the editor of *Christianity and European Culture: Selected Writings of Christopher Dawson* and an edition of Dawson's *Religion and Culture*. He has written many articles and reviews on Dawson and the Catholic intellectual tradition and currently serves as editor of *The University Bookman*. He received his undergraduate degree in classics from Georgetown and a law degree from New York University School of Law.

Julian Scott is the grandson of Christopher Dawson and his literary executor, a position previously filled by Julian's mother, the late Christina Scott, Dawson's first biographer. Julian lives in London with his wife Sabine. Inspired by his late godfather, Esteban Pujals, a professor of English literature at Madrid University who was

a great friend of Christopher Dawson, he studied Spanish at London University and now runs a Spanish translation business in London. He has had a lifelong interest in philosophy, comparative religion, and history and is in the process of setting up a website dedicated to the life and works of Christopher Dawson.

JOSEPH T. STUART is Associate Professor of History and Fellow of Catholic Studies at the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. He earned a Ph.D. in modern intellectual history from the University of Edinburgh (2010) and has published on Christopher Dawson in *Britain and the World*, *Logos*, and the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*. He also wrote the introduction to *Progresso & Religião: Uma Investigação Histórica*, by Christopher Dawson, translated by Fabio Faria (São Paulo: Realizações, 2010), as well as the introduction to Dawson's *The Gods of Revolution* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2015).

ADAM TATE is Professor of History and Chair of the Department of Humanities at Clayton State University in Morrow, Georgia. He studied American history at the University of Alabama where he earned an M.A. and Ph.D. He researches and writes on American intellectual history.

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Introduction

The Achievement of Christopher Dawson[1]

Joseph T. Stuart
Guest Editor

An encounter with a book can set a person's face in a direction that deeply influences the rest of her life. When the German-Jewish philosopher Edith Stein (1891–1942) found the *The Life of Teresa of Jesus* on her friend's bookshelf, she spent the whole night reading it. In the morning she pronounced: "That is the truth." She died in Auschwitz as a Catholic nun and a martyr.[2] But when, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) spent whole nights as a child reading romances with his father,[3] or when Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) became fixated on war after finding a picture magazine about the Franco-Prussian War in his father's library,[4] a person's life can take a destructive turn. Such powerful encounters with books can shape one's whole destiny.

I once met such a book myself. It was more of the sort that Stein read than of romances or war, and it set me on a deeply rewarding pathway that my life still follows. I was nineteen years old then and confused. But I possessed a thirst to know and a fascination with the past and with ideas. It was at that moment of need and desire that I read Christopher Dawson's *Progress and Religion* (1929). Stumbling against a great mind is both frightening and exhilarating. As I struggled to read this book I felt the delight of discovering new intellectual territories and longed to share in this man's broad yet profound view of human culture and history. I wanted his help in reaching my own intellectual maturity.

I was not disappointed. With the aid of an outstanding undergraduate teacher,[5] the pages of *Progress and Religion* opened a way forward in my intellectual life. There were names I had never encountered together, marshaled and juxtaposed into a startling and grand conversation, such as Plato and Irenaeus and Francis Bacon and Max Weber and many others. The book sketched a landscape in which the social sciences and theology cooperated. It revealed the uniqueness of Christianity against the backdrop of world religions. It was arranged intelligibly and made a forceful argument. The very structure of the book helped form mental architecture that is the foundation of all future learning. It is such architecture that allows one to place new knowledge and to relate it back to the whole. John Henry Newman (1801–1890) wrote in his *The Idea of a University* (1852) that a truly great intellect is not one simply full of facts. Rather, it is one that takes a "connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near, and which has an insight into the influence of all these one on another: without which there is no whole and no centre."[6] It is obvious in *Progress and Religion* that Dawson possessed just such an intellect. In fact, this book was intended as an introduction to a series of books on the life of world civilizations. Though Dawson did not write the projected series as he originally conceived it, surveying the themes of *Progress and Religion* nevertheless serves well as an introduction to his achievement as a scholar.

What Is Progress?

This idea of Progress,[7] Dawson wrote, has pervaded the European mind since the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. At a popular level, it meant "more cinemas, motor-cars for all, wireless installations, more elaborate methods of killing people, purchase on the hire system, preserved foods and picture papers."[8] One could simply change the names of these technologies and find a similar popular conception of Progress in the twenty-first century. To question this scientific and technological idea of Progress has long been heresy, Dawson noted. However, he sensed after the Great War, when *Progress and Religion* was published, a new

milieu in which some had begun to doubt the validity of the idea of Progress.[9]

In that new atmosphere of uncertainty Dawson published his book, arguing that unless human progress contained a spiritual and intellectual content along with material prosperity, no true progress could be made. While he shared the pessimism of some, holding that advance in one direction often corresponded with retrogression in another, he nevertheless argued that true progress is not illusory. It should not be conceived in the purely rationalistic and scientific terms of Comte and other secular humanists. Rather, one must look back in order to go forward. In this way, one sees that religion had long been associated with the development of human culture. "Unless men believe that they have an all-powerful ally outside time, they will inevitably abandon the ideal of a supernatural or anti-natural moral progress and make the best of the world as they find it, conforming themselves to the law of self-interest and self-preservation which governs the rest of nature."[10] Unless ethics and a teleological, religious conception of reality give direction—an end above itself—to material progress and human thought, science itself can easily become a tool against humanity and progress.

Though Dawson warned about the misapplication of science against the true good of man, the development of science is an important component of true progress in his book. However, that development should not be viewed as parasitic domination over the natural world. Unless men use their scientific knowledge to live in greater harmony with nature they will undermine the ecological foundations of their civilizations. In fact, Dawson wrote, the more a culture advances, the more fully will it express itself through its material conditions, and the more intimate is the cooperation of man and nature.[11]

To Walk around the Whole World: Dawson's View of Christianity and Progress

In Part One of *Progress and Religion*, Dawson shows that religion is the great dynamic in social life. True progress rests on that

dynamic and on the coordination of scientific and ecological development. Part Two adds historical detail to the important relation between progress and religion. Here the reader encounters Dawson's electrifying interpretation of Christianity and progress viewed against a backdrop of comparative religion and world history. The English writer G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) wrote the following in his 1925 book *The Everlasting Man*: "There are two ways of getting home; and one of them is to stay there. The other is to walk around the whole world till we come back to the same place."[12] He explained that in order to understand Christianity it can be helpful to be completely outside it, to view it from afar, as a foreign culture. This Dawson does in *Progress and Religion*. He outlines the earliest stages of the rise of civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia and India and China. He shows how the stability of their ritualistic religious cultures underpinned the material development of civilizations. He then covers the religious crisis of the first millennium BC and the rise of the higher world religions that "tended to turn away men's minds from the world of human experience to the contemplation of absolute and unchanging Being, from Time to Eternity."[13] This movement tended to devalue history and view time as cyclical, which undermined any conception of progress. There was one important exception to that tendency, however: the religion of the Jews. For them, history possessed a profound value because it had a beginning and an end. It was where Yahweh acted in the life of His people.

This *importance of the historic* was amplified by Christianity. God Himself embraced human nature, entering into history. From the very beginning, Christianity fought the notion of time conceived as cycles. Rather, all of creation would be redeemed through the life of men in history. This gave an extraordinary nobility to man. In this way, progress could be real. It meant not only the transformation of human nature but also the spiritualization of all of nature, through the action of divine grace and the cooperation of human beings. Christianity affirmed both the transcendence of God and the divine-like nature of man. Spirit and matter were no

longer at war but consubstantial in the human person and lived out in the society of the Church.

Dawson shows how Christianity became a dynamic moral and social force in the Western world as a new civilization took shape after the fall of Rome. The medieval achievement—a new focus on the humanity of Christ, the social ideal of uniting faith and life, and the assertion of human reason by Thomas Aquinas and others—served as the foundation for later developments in the arts and sciences from the Renaissance onward.

As Christian civilization divided after the Reformation, secularization thwarted attempts to base society and the state on a religious foundation. The men of the eighteenth century looked for new ideals to unite the people. One of those was the idea of Progress. That idea, which came to function sociologically as a unifying worldview in Western cultures, functioned as a secular religion while retaining certain fundamental Christian assumptions. "Thus the belief in the moral perfectibility and the indefinite progress of the human race took the place of the Christian faith in the life of the world to come, as the final goal of human effort."[14] The idea of *teleology* (history possesses a direction and thus a meaning) was stripped of its religious origins and secularized to become the idea of Progress.

Dawson suggests that, without Christianity, there is scant support for the idea of meaningful, progressive time within the modern, mechanistic conception of science that subsumes man wholly into the world of nature. Without Christianity, the idea of Progress loses the *theological optimism about existence* that originally gave birth to it.

Structure and Argument

How does Dawson make these arguments concerning progress and religion? That is a question of method and structure, and it is here where Dawson's interdisciplinary approach comes to light. A subject is described *synchronically* when it is explained by its many facets as it exists at one point in time. A subject is described *diachronically* when it is explained by its development over time.

For example, the anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* (1940) synchronically studied the culture or way of life of the Nuer, a people of southern Sudan, at a particular point in time, the 1930s.[15] Diachronic study of the Nuer, on the other hand, would study the history of their culture and its changes over time. Dawson's book unites both approaches. He attempts to understand the relationship between progress and religion by studying culture synchronically with sociology and anthropology and diachronically with history. *Culture*, then, studied synchronically and diachronically, is the common object of knowledge that he attempts to understand through theology and the social sciences.[16] *Progress and Religion* is exciting because it connects these disciplines in the reader's mind and harnesses their analytical powers to an immense project of synthesis: understanding the nature of human culture and the relevant factors in cultural development or progress.

The structure of the book shows how this can be done. Part One examines the rise of sociology, history, and anthropology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their contributions to understanding human culture and progress. Dawson argues that culture is a *common way of life*, a four-fold community of place, work, blood, and thought.[17] Behind every civilization there is a vision that affects the intellectual and material sides of culture. Thus, it is intellectual or spiritual change that produces the farthest-reaching changes in the culture of a people. Part Two applies this argument to various stages of world history, from the origin of civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt to the role of Christianity in the development of Western civilization. He concludes the book: "We have followed the development of human culture through the ages, and have seen how at every step the religion of a society expresses its dominant attitude to life and its ultimate conception of reality. Religion is the great dynamic force in social life, and the vital changes in civilization are always linked with changes in religious beliefs and ideals."[18] That conclusion would become one of the central ideas of the many volumes to emerge from Dawson's pen.

The Uses of Dawson for the Scholar and the Teacher

Dawson's work is best understood in the context of intellectual problems that arose in Britain and Europe after the Great War in the fields of sociology, history, politics, and religion.[19] However, the impact of that work continues to be felt in the twenty-first century through the interdisciplinary Catholic Studies programs arising across the United States and the republication of many of Dawson's books.[20] Those books are invaluable for the scholar and the teacher. For example, *Progress and Religion* is required reading for my sophomore course "Religion and Culture" because of its succinct, clearly written argument concerning the relationship between religion and culture in history. And it has had a deep influence on the way I teach world history.

Progress and Religion appeared in 1929 at a time when the study of world history first took shape after the close of the First World War in 1918. The old model of historical writing that focused on national political histories was challenged by the horrors of that conflict of nations. A new question arose: How can historians practice their trade while avoiding the nationalistic narratives that had contributed to the war? One answer was to focus not on individual nations but on world history. Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) published the first volume of his *Decline of the West* in 1918, and H. G. Wells (1866–1946) published the *Outline of History* in 1920. The English historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) conceived the outline of his *Study of History* in 1920; the first three volumes appeared in 1933.[21] Christopher Dawson shared their concerns about finding another way of writing about history that avoided the narrowness of national history.

World history emerged as a distinct academic field in the 1980s. It looks for common patterns that emerge across all cultures. *Progress and Religion* was ahead of its time in uncovering many of these patterns. Dawson's argument emphasizes commonalities in world history: his theory of culture, the six primary nature occupations he discusses in chapter three (miner, forester, hunter, pastoralist, agriculturalist, and fisherman), and the hierarchy of world

religions he discusses in chapters five and six (prophetic, ritualistic, ethical, metaphysical, and theological). I have found that utilizing common patterns such as these in world history class helps students make sense of the historical facts presented in the texts. Common patterns become a set of tools that help students compare and generalize and thus move from mere information to real understanding of the fundamental structures of human life through time. In this way they hopefully begin to develop a mental architecture that is the basis of future learning and of the kind of expansive intellect discussed by Newman.

Despite these valuable contributions to the study and teaching of world history, by the mid-twentieth century Dawson critiqued what he called "ecumenical" world history and reasserted the importance of Europe and the Western historical tradition. He did this in his *Movement of World Revolution* (1959). Ecumenical world history sought to embrace the "whole history of every people from China to Peru without preference or prejudice." This ecumenical view condemned the old European view of history as provincial or "ethnocentric." The ideal of this ecumenical historical perspective was to transcend the tradition of one society and view all civilizations equally in one history of humanity. However, there were problems with this ideal. Until one or two centuries ago, Dawson noted, the "historic world was not an intelligible unity. It was made up of a number of independent civilizations, which were like separate worlds, each of them with its own historical tradition and its own idea of world history." There was very little, if any, contact between vast regions of the world until the "movement of world revolution" started in Europe (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries), bringing the entire world into contact through science, technology, and the spread of ideas. The "study of the European past is still relevant to modern world history, since Europe was the original source of the movement of change in which the whole world is now involved and it is in European history that we find the key to the understanding of the ideologies which divide the modern world." Therefore, he wrote, "I believe that it is only by way of Europe and the Western historical tradition that it is possible to

approach that universal world history which has so long been the ideal of the philosophers of history."[22] These are valuable insights when considering the content and pedagogy in world history classes today.

While Dawson's arguments concerning progress, religion, and world history are persuasive and profound, it is the mold of Dawson's mind that is so compelling. He takes a position. Even if one does not agree with him, he makes an argument and weaves together facts into a meaningful account. The editor of *First Things* recently wrote that students are often fed a starvation diet of "small, inconsequential truths—facts and theories unrelated to any deeper meaning—because those are the only truths of which we can be sure we're avoiding error."[23] Critical thinking and fear of error are important, but so too is the habit of credulity. Belief is the only way for truth to enter into us, when it becomes ours and we can say, "Yes, I know that is true." It can be dangerous to fear error so much as to become intellectually moribund and incapable of seeking the "rich reward of engrossing, life-commanding truths."[24] Dawson's work, especially his concise and brilliant book *Progress and Religion*, shows just how far the light of understanding can be cast upon the vast landscape of history when one founds one's vision on deep-seated truths about the nature of the human person, culture, and the place of religion in human life.

The Symposium on Christopher Dawson

This issue of the *Political Science Reviewer* brings together an important biographical lecture and articles on Dawson's achievement. Julian Scott, Dawson's grandson, spoke at the University of St. Thomas in April 2011. His lecture, sponsored by the Center for Catholic Studies, was called "The Life and Times of Christopher Dawson" and drew from new biographical material from the family archive.

Khalil Habib does not seek to break new ground in his article "Christianity and Western Civilization: An Introduction to Christopher Dawson's *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*." Rather, he seeks to introduce readers to one of Dawson's seminal

books—the Gifford Lectures for 1948–1949—and hence his article appears first (after Scott's lecture) in this symposium. Gerald Russello examines Dawson's other set of Gifford Lectures, *Religion and Culture*. He does seek to break new ground in his argument against the reductionism of the New Atheists by showing how Dawson united the scientific study of religion with an account of religious experience. Lee Trepanier shows in "Culture and History in Eric Voegelin and Christopher Dawson" that while these two thinkers shared many concerns, Voegelin lacked a concept of culture in his work that made it impossible for him to offer a convincing account of historical change, whereas Dawson could. A comparative study of these two thinkers has long been needed. In "Wrestling with the Modern State: Christopher Dawson and the Background to *The Crisis of Western Education*," Adam Tate forwards a two-part argument: first, that Dawson's solution to the problem of the modern state was his educational proposal for the study of the history of Christian culture, and secondly that this proposal failed to gain much traction even among Catholics because of the fragmentation of American Catholics and American conservatives during the 1950s and 1960s. Mattei Ion Radu wrote much of "Dawson and Communism: How Much Did He Get Right?" but was not able to finish it because of his tragic death on May 7, 2010. Already at the age of twenty-eight, Radu held graduate degrees in law and history and was a prolific writer of scholarly articles. He was an editor, international traveler, and dedicated activist and speaker in the prolife movement. Though unfinished, his article makes the argument (based on extensive scholarship on Russian communism) that Dawson's characterization of communism as antithetical to Christianity was factually and demonstrably true. My own article shares Radu's concerns. It argues that Dawson's use of "political religion" to describe the nature and appeal of fascism, nazism, and communism has been substantiated by contemporary scholarship on political religion and by evidence from the interwar years.

The final essay of this symposium is by Dawson himself: "The Claims of Politics." First published in 1939, Dawson here argues

that in the face of the "expansion of Politics" the responsibility of the man of letters is to serve society with intellectual integrity by defending the true end of the state and exposing the ideologies on which political action is based. With such a call to responsibility to intellectuals the symposium comes to a conclusion.

Endnotes

1. A version of this introduction appeared in Portuguese: *Progresso & Religião: Uma Investigação Histórica*, by Christopher Dawson, trans. by Fabio Faria, introduction by Joseph T. Stuart (São Paulo: Realizações, 2010).
2. Robert Royal, *The Catholic Martyrs of the Twentieth Century: A Comprehensive World History* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 176.
3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (New York: Modern Library, 2013), 6.
4. Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973), 26.
5. Professor James Gaston at the Franciscan University of Steubenville; Adam Tate of this symposium and I were both Gaston students, though at different times.
6. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse 6, http://www.newmanreader.org/works/idea/discourse6.html.
7. In this Introduction, "Progress" (capital "P") refers to the *idea* of progress, to the modern belief in the ideology of progress; "progress" (small "p") refers to the *fact* of progress. See also Joseph T. Stuart, "The Question of Human Progress in Britain after the Great War," *British Scholar* I (2008) and "Christopher Dawson and the Idea of Progress," *Logos* 14, no. 4 (2011).
8. Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 17.
9. Ibid., 15–16.
10. Ibid., 28.
11. Ibid., 54.
12. G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1993), 9.
13. Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 120.
14. Ibid., 149.
15. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1960).

16. See also Christopher Dawson, "Sociology as a Science," in *Science Today: The Scientific Outlook on World Problems Explained by Leading Exponents of Modern Scientific Thought*, ed. J. G. Crowther and Sir J. Arthur Thomson (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1934); republished as Christopher Dawson, "Sociology as a Science," in *Dynamics of World History*, ed. John J. Mulloy (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2002).
17. Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 66.
18. Ibid., 181.
19. Joseph T. Stuart, "Christopher Dawson in Context: A Study in British Intellectual History between the World Wars," unpublished dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2009.
20. Catholic Studies programs, inspired by Dawson's intellectual legacy, are growing and flourishing across the country, such as at the University of St. Thomas (St. Paul), Aquinas College, Arizona State University, Boston College, and the University of Mary. Catholic University of America has recently republished eight of Dawson's books, including *Progress and Religion*.
21. See Paul Costello, *World Historians and Their Goals: Twentieth-Century Answers to Modernism* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993).
22. Christopher Dawson, *The Movement of World Revolution* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1959), 5, 8, 23.
23. R. R. Reno, "Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking," *First Things*, no. 214 (2011): 6.
24. Ibid., 7.

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The Life and Times of Christopher Dawson

Julian Scott

This essay is about how one man experienced the period of history in which he lived, from 1889 to 1970, a period of history that was full of dramatic changes.[1] It is also about his life, his personality, his family, and his friends. This man was Christopher Dawson, a historian of culture, a philosopher of history, and a deeply religious man whose religion very much colored his writing and research but whose aim was to reach an audience as wide as possible and to stimulate his readers to deeper thought about history and life. As he once said to the artist David Jones, "It's the kind of people who read the *Daily Mirror* I would like to be read by!" This was a telling comment as the *Daily Mirror* was the most popular working-class paper of the day.

In preparation for this essay, I wanted to speak to people who still remembered my grandfather, so I conducted interviews with my father, who was his son-in-law, and with Rosemary Middleton, the daughter of Frank Sheed, Dawson's publisher. I also drew upon my own scant memories and those of my brothers and have relied heavily on the biography of Dawson written by my mother, Christina Scott, as well as several lectures she gave about him. In addition, I have in my possession some family documents that have yielded a certain amount of historical material about his family and a few unpublished letters. Magdalen Goffin, one of the daughters of Dawson's great friend, E. I. Watkin, has written a detailed and very interesting biography of her father (*The Watkin Path*), which proved very useful, and there is also a helpful biography of Dawson by Bradley J. Birzer.[2]

Dawson had a very interesting family background. His mother, who was Welsh, was a keen amateur historian. She researched the lives of many Welsh saints and wrote a history of the Dawson family into which she had married. She was the daughter of Archdeacon Bevan, a scholarly Victorian clergyman with a powerful personality whose parish came with an old castle where the family lived, but a very small salary. This was in the town of Hay-on-Wye, in the Welsh borders, now a mecca for book buyers and sellers from around the world. The family is mentioned in *Kilvert's Diary*, the diary of a minor Victorian clergyman, whom one of the Bevan sisters referred to as "a rather silly man." Kilvert spent much of his time at Hay and loved the company of Dawson's mother and her sisters.

Dawson was born in this castle, which was later partly destroyed in a fire, and was brought up surrounded by history and no doubt regaled with historical tales by his mother. The family were staunch members of the Anglican Church and hostile to Catholicism, a fact that would prove difficult for Dawson when he later converted.

Dawson's father, Colonel Henry Philip Dawson, was an English army officer but also of a scholarly bent. Much to his own disappointment he had never taken part in any military action and retired from the army early, when he inherited his father's estates in Yorkshire and decided to go and live there with his wife and young family. While in the army, he had taken part in a number of scientific expeditions, one in South America (Peru and Bolivia) and another in Canada, where he commanded a circumpolar expedition to Fort Rae. He wrote a number of letters to his mother from these expeditions, which were later typed up in the form of a notebook.[3] It contains beautiful descriptions of the Canadian landscape and its rivers teeming with fish.

The Dawson family contained many strands. Beginning as minor landowners in Yorkshire, they became rich through marriage and trade, and in the eighteenth century frequented the Court of George III and gave society balls in London. One ancestor was a Huguenot who became chaplain to George II and then George III; another was a general who fought in the Peninsula wars.

So Dawson had a personal involvement in history from an early age. Obviously, there was also a temperamental inclination, a talent for writing, and perhaps the intervention of fate. His sister, Gwendoline, was also interested in history but never became a historian. Instead she became an Anglican missionary in Africa, where, we were always told as children, she caught malaria and began to "rave in Swahili" after a witch-doctor had left a sacrificed chicken outside her hut. By all accounts, Gwendoline was a very nice person, outgoing, fun, and always thinking of others. She shocked her family by voting Labour and giving a speech to workers at a margarine factory urging them to go on strike. Her only fault seems to have been that she was a terrifying driver.

Many years later, in 1949, Dawson wrote a memoir entitled *Tradition and Inheritance: Memories of a Victorian Childhood* to capture the spirit of a lost world and to highlight the influence of his early childhood impressions and family background on his life's work.[4] In it he says, "The world of my childhood is already as far away from the contemporary world as it was from the world of the middle ages."

Dawson's idyllic childhood in the Yorkshire Dales was cut short when he was sent away to boarding school at the age of ten, as boys commonly were in those days. He went first to a preparatory school in the Midlands, called Bilton Grange, which he absolutely hated. There he was frequently ill, not only due to his unhappiness but also, according to his own theory, because he had no immunity to the many germs circulating among the boys, as he had previously led such a healthy life in the Yorkshire countryside.

Pictures of him as a toddler make him look remarkably robust, and yet we know that ill health was a constant feature of his life. He suffered from chronic insomnia, periodic depression, and a range of other ailments. It seems that it all began at this school, where he not only caught all the normal childhood illnesses but also developed chronic bronchitis.

In 1903, he moved on to the next stage of his education, at Winchester College, a public school (in England, this actually means a private school for boys aged thirteen to eighteen)

renowned for its high intellectual standards, whose motto is "Manners maketh man." This aspect of his education does seem to have rubbed off on him, because everyone who knew him always described him as a very courteous person. My father recalls him in this respect: "When I first met him, I was going through an agnostic stage, and I remember having a discussion over the tea table and me more or less saying, 'Well, I think all religions have something to be said for them and are more or less equal, don't you?' He said, 'Not entirely.' He was very tactful and rather nice."

Although school life was not congenial to Dawson, he definitely preferred Winchester to his prep school because the atmosphere was more intellectual, the curriculum was wider, and he had much more freedom. However, after a year, due to the austere life (cold baths and so on) and the damp climate, he had an acute attack of bronchitis and his parents decided to take him away, afraid that he might die. They sent him to a small private tutorial establishment called Bletsoe Rectory that was much more to his liking. In fact, it was a great relief to him and he describes it as the happiest and most carefree period of his life.

There he met Edward Watkin, who would become his lifelong friend, although their first encounter was far from promising. At the time, Dawson was an agnostic and Watkin a devoted Anglo-Catholic. They got into a religious argument that resulted in Watkin bringing the back of a garden chair down upon Dawson's head.[5]

After completing his secondary education, he went up to Oxford to study history at Trinity College. Surprisingly, Dawson did not particularly enjoy his time at Oxford, partly because of his intense shyness and feelings of inferiority to the other young men, all of whom seemed to belong to some clique or another. Watkin, with whom he shared rooms at one point, remembered him once hiding under the table when some visitors came.

His tutor, Ernest Barker, whose field was Greek political theory, was a strongly individualistic character with a booming voice and a strong Manchester accent with whom Dawson got on remarkably well. Barker later said of him that he had "the mind and

the equipment of a philosophical historian above any contemporary or pupil" he had ever known.[6] (According to my brother Dominic, Ernest Barker once proposed to Dawson's sister Gwendoline, but for whatever reason she turned him down.) However, Dawson was not interested in following the syllabus and preferred to study what attracted him personally, and in this Professor Barker encouraged him, being himself "a man of many-sided interests," in Dawson's words.[7] As a result he gained only a second-class degree, while his friend Watkin was awarded a first-class degree, with the highest mark in his college.

They both received their results by telegram while Watkin was on a visit to Dawson and his family at Hartlington in Yorkshire. An account of this survives in a journal kept by Watkin, which has been published with an introduction and notes by Joseph T. Stuart.[8] It gives a remarkable picture of the times; another world that, for some people at least, was idyllic. Watkin was picked up from the station by Dawson in a horse-drawn carriage. He went on walks with Dawson, his sister and some friends, and frequently went bathing in the local rivers.

Watkin loved to strip and bathe in rivers or lie in the grass. It fits in with the picture of him as a very natural and eccentric person, which emerges from his daughter Magdalen's biography and from my interviews with those who knew him. My father tells the following story about him:

> E. I. Watkin couldn't have been less like your grandfather in one way, because he was much more outgoing. In fact he could be great fun and could take a joke against himself. One evening, your mother and I were having drinks at Fordcombe with his daughter Magdalen and her husband, Richard Goffin. E. I., then elderly and pretty stout, was staying with them and sitting more or less naked from the waist up sprawled in front of the log fire. Suddenly, Richard got up, went to the front door, opened it and shouted "Come in Vicar!" This was a trick he had apparently played before, but it worked once again. E. I. leapt to his feet,

> preparatory to rushing upstairs to put on more respectable clothes.

Rosemary Middleton, the daughter of Dawson's publisher, told me of her memories of Watkin:

> He was extremely eccentric and his whole demeanor and gait drew attention to him as a strange person. There was the time before one of his daughter's weddings, when my father looked at him nervously and said something like "Are you going to be wearing a morning suit?" and he said "But it would make me look so … conspicuous!"—as if anything could be more conspicuous than how he always looked.

Rosemary continues:

> He was a darling; he was so extraordinary. I can remember traveling on a bus with him from Sheed & Ward's office to the Café Royal where we were meeting my father for lunch and he was sitting two seats away from me because it was a crowded bus and he was talking in his extraordinary way which was very difficult to understand because it was so fast, all of it; and he had a sort of knitting bag in which he had all his books or whatever he was travelling with and he just was so eccentric!

What is also fascinating about Watkin's diary of his visit to Hartlington is that he keeps a detailed record of everything he read, which reveals the almost constant reading that occupied both him and Dawson. The following excerpt is typical:

> We read some most amusing back numbers of Punch. Of *The Broad Stone of Honour* (volume 2) I read from page 62 to circa 175. We had tea out on the terrace. In the evening I read chapters 15 and 16 of St. John's Gospel (G & L)

> and continued Tancredus. I also read chapter 10 of part 9 (volume 5) of *Modern Painters*, "The Nereid's Guard." After dinner I looked through Borlasc's "Age of the Saints," a most interesting book on the saints and Christian archaeology in Cornwall. Before bed I read canto 15 of Dante's Inferno.

If the diary is anything to go on, Watkin seemed to be more interested in the books he was reading than the people he met, of whom he says little or nothing.

At night they would go out onto the terrace to look at the stars with Dawson's father, who was interested in astronomy. He also seems to have been something of an astrologer, because Watkin tells of a prediction he made about a forthcoming war between Germany, Britain, France, and Russia, followed by pestilence, based on a conjunction of the planets Mars and Saturn in Aries. This was in the summer of 1911.

It was while he was at Oxford that Dawson met his future wife, Valery. The story of their meeting is very romantic, as recounted in my mother's biography of Dawson. Dawson was invited to a party at Oxford, where he saw a photograph of Valery dressed as Joan of Arc. Seeing him so enraptured, his host offered to introduce him to her at a later date. When he met her, he found that "she was more beautiful in real life than in the photograph, and fell immediately and hopelessly in love with her."[9]

She and Dawson were very different personalities, although they shared an interest in antiquities, a love of beauty, and a dislike of urban life. Valery's mother, Mrs. Mills, was against the match, on the grounds of Dawson's ill health. Indeed, in the year of their marriage, Dawson was writing to Valery from a nursing home while she was looking for somewhere for them both to live. So it does raise the question of why Valery agreed to marry him. She had several other admirers but was fascinated by the shy but handsome young man whom she referred to as a walking encyclopedia. In those days she thought only of dances, parties, and flirtations, but it seems that an audience with Pope Pius X influenced her to

reform her life. It was not what he said to her but the way he looked into her eyes. Valery's mother recalled:

> When the Holy Father entered the room we felt to be in the presence of a saint, his expression was wonderful, never to be forgotten. He looked earnestly at each one when he gave his hand to be kissed and his eyes seemed to search one's heart; he looked twice at Valery, the second time when he stood at the end of the room and gave his blessing to all of us and to our families.

Dawson proposed to Valery when she returned to Oxford in 1913, and she had no hesitation in accepting despite all the objections on both sides of the family. But the business of proposing was no easy matter for the shy Dawson. According to Valery's own account, as told to my mother, "He was completely tongue-tied when he came to propose—he came back the next day and failed again and it was only on the third visit he succeeded in getting out his words because he knew he would not be seeing her again for some time."

Thereafter, Valery played a pivotal role in Dawson's life because, apart from anything else, she looked after all those mundane aspects that he found rather difficult, such as paying bills and visiting schools, protecting him from all unpleasantness and interruptions, inviting friends around and so on. Sometimes she could go a bit too far in her eagerness to make everything run smoothly for her husband. My father told me a story that illustrates this:

> After the war, in Budleigh Salterton, they had a friend called Ralph Ricketts. Ralph was a writer as well, and one day I met him outside the London Library and he was literally still shaking with rage because Valery had rung him up and said, 'Oh, you must come round, Christopher's not very well, Christopher needs some company,' and there was Ralph trying to write his *own* book.

Many years later, toward the end of Dawson's period in America, Valery was awarded an honorary doctorate from Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts, and I think she probably well deserved it in light of all the sacrifices she made for Dawson's work.

Valery was born a Catholic and no doubt Dawson's love for her was a factor in his conversion, as he converted shortly after their engagement. However, from the beginning of his time at Oxford he had begun to come into contact with Catholic influences through Watkin, who had already converted. He was also steeping himself in Augustine's *City of God* and the works of several other Catholic authors. In 1909 (before meeting Valery), Dawson visited Rome with Watkin and had a vision of his life's work on the steps of the Capitol, which is recounted in my mother's biography.[10] Sitting in the same place where Edward Gibbon had been inspired to write *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he felt guided by God to write a history of culture. But at this point he was still a long way from converting.

Conversion was no light decision, especially in those days, when the ties of religion and family were very strong. Dawson's mother never reconciled herself to his change of allegiance, and his Welsh relations cut him off completely. Only his father showed some sympathy because he was Anglo-Catholic. Perhaps this experience of social ostracism gave him a personal interest in the writing of his book *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, whose protagonist, Newman, went through the same process but on a much more public stage.

Shortly after his time at Oxford the First World War broke out. Neither Dawson nor Watkin was called up, as Dawson was exempt on health grounds and Watkin, being a pacifist, was a conscientious objector. It is interesting to hear Dawson's views of the First World War, as expressed in his work *Religion and the Modern State*:

> As a direct result of the War the European social organism lost its political stability and its economic equilibrium, while at the same time the forces of disintegration were

> immeasurably strengthened. … Nor is this all, for the spiritual results of the War were no less serious than the economic. It dealt a mortal blow to the idealism and optimism and humanitarianism of European liberalism and aroused instincts of violence which had hitherto been dormant. In a word it changed the spiritual atmosphere of Europe.[11]

From around 1914 onward, Dawson embarked on a period of intense private study, during which time he published very little.[12] He had a small allowance from his father that enabled him to survive and a meager income from the publication of articles, particularly in a periodical called *The Sociological Review*, to which he was a regular contributor.

In 1919 Dawson and Valery's first child, Juliana, was born, later to be followed by Christina, my mother, and then Philip. They lived in many places, as if Dawson found it very difficult to settle anywhere. My mother said she always remembered that biblical phrase "Here we have no abiding city," which she found very apt. In 1924 Dawson took up a part-time lectureship in the history of culture at Exeter University, so they moved to Dawlish on the Devonshire coast. There they had a house large enough for themselves and the enormous library that Dawson had inherited from his uncle as well as his own books. I spoke to my aunt Juliana shortly before she died in December 2009 and asked her what she remembered of her father. She was not in possession of all her faculties by that time and her reply was simply this: "He had a very large library."

I am sometimes asked by admirers of my grandfather's work whether I knew him well and whether he was a great family man. As to the first question, I was born in the year he went to the United States (1958), and when he returned, some five years later, it was in a wheelchair having suffered a series of strokes. I only remember meeting him on the grounds of a nursing home and that he had considerable difficulty in speaking. My other brothers have similarly sketchy recollections, although my youngest brother,

Dominic, who went to school at Sidmouth, near where they lived, remembers holding up one of his books to him as a child and Dawson, who by that time could hardly speak, managing to say: "*I* wrote that."

As to the second question—whether he was a great family man—the answer seems to be fairly conclusively no. He was interested in the family from a historical and sociological point of view and considered it as central to the welfare of society, but his own family came second to his work: "Everything in that family revolved around Christopher," my father told me. "He was the one on whom all attention must be focused."

My mother says in her biography that he was approachable as a father but that as the children grew up an increasing distance seemed to come between them. From my father's accounts, and those of others I have spoken to, Dawson and Valery were very unappreciative of my mother. According to my father, it seemed to give them no great pleasure, as it would to most parents, that they had a clever daughter who went to Oxford, and he cites several instances in which they treated her rather badly.

Nor were they very happy, surprisingly, when their eldest daughter Juliana became a nun. My father comments: "You might have thought they would have been pleased to have a daughter become a nun, but not at all. They would have preferred her to continue to live at home with them, or to have got married. Valery in particular was distraught about it."

As for their son, Philip, it seems that Valery rather spoiled him, while Dawson despaired of his inability to stick to anything. Dominic recalls the following from his childhood memories:

> My most amusing encounter was when Philip was also there for lunch with Valery, and just me. She had promised to buy him some sort of trolley or "hostess" and they were going through the catalogue. He was being very choosy, so I blurted out that she was spoiling him. I'm not sure how well that went down, but they pretended to find it funny. In retrospect, maybe it was a bit close to the bone.

All in all, my impression is that Dawson and Valery were not the best of parents. I suppose that in the light of Dawson's general character, this was perhaps to be expected. He was temperamentally very reserved, suffered from frequent ill health, and was constantly worrying about how his books were being received as well as the state of the world. In addition, he lived very much in his mind, as many people have testified.

Maisie Ward recounts in her autobiography an incident in which her husband, Frank Sheed, went to visit Dawson.[13] Upon opening the door, and without any form of preliminary greeting, Dawson said: "What remarkable similarities there are between the religion of the Hairy Ainu and the Northern Siberian Nomads—although ethnologically they are quite distinct."

However, if he felt that someone was interested in his ideas, and as long as that person was not a rival, he could be extremely friendly and communicative. Sheed's daughter, Rosemary, told me the following anecdote:

> A friend of mine, an American who had got a scholarship to go and do a PhD at Louvain, went to see him because the research she was doing was very much in his line and she'd read all his books; and she had a wonderful time. I mean, he just was so helpful to her because she was interested in what he was interested in and she wanted to hear what he had to say.

I think that his students in the United States probably had the same experience, but as Rosemary pointed out, you had to be talking about something that interested him.

In my mother's biography there is a very interesting portrait in words of Dawson by Ralph Ricketts, who lived near the Dawsons when they were in Budleigh Salterton. It is too long to reproduce in full here, but the following are a few extracts:

> I first met Christopher Dawson in 1954 or 1955 when he must have been about sixty-five. … I recall a mixture of

> venerability and youthfulness; his courtesy … the unusual combination of fragility and virility. … I have heard it said that Christopher was difficult to talk to; certainly he had little interest in small talk. … I found him stimulating. … His large brown eyes were almost feminine in their liquid expressiveness, revealing his thought and feeling: they would glint with an almost mischievous amusement, grow bright with interest or opaque with apathy or disapproval. … He was essentially well bred in every sense of the word. … He was never malicious. Beneath his sensibility he gave an impression of balance, even of stoicism; but he could be touchy. To some extent, you had to bend to his mood and wishes: if he was tired or bored, he made little effort to disguise it; in fact, he made little social effort of any kind. He was completely natural, like a child.[14]

My father completes this picture with his own impressions of his then future father-in-law:

> He was diffident and had no sort of general conversation. I was quite good at drawing him out, partly because I was interested in the matters he wrote about and partly because I wasn't his intellectual equal. He was quite touchy when it came to his equals and rivals.
>
> I was studying history at Cambridge at the time and the only book of his I had read was *The Making of Europe*, which helped to make his name and was on the reading list at Cambridge when I was up. If you were studying that period of history you probably read that book. There was another academic of the time called Moss, who was, as I heard, a most genial, sociable man. *The Making of Europe* is a study of the Dark Ages and simultaneously with his book came one by Moss, which was much more a straight political history of the time. They were both quite different, and the don who was at one point my supervisor told me that on one occasion he had invited both your

> grandfather and Moss to have tea with him, and the fact was that Moss was an absolutely wonderful guest, while your grandfather hardly uttered a word, or if he did his replies were monosyllabic. So the whole tea party was a great failure.

Ward sums up these two sides of Dawson's character in her autobiography:

> From Chinese dynasties to American Indians, from prehistory to the Oxford Movement, from Virgil to the latest novel or even "Western," Christopher can talk of anything, although you can also find him plunged in an almost unbreakable silence and impervious to the people and things around him.[15]

In 1928, at the age of forty, his first book (*The Age of the Gods*) was published by the firm John Murray and did quite well for an academic book of this type. Soon after, however, he was persuaded to move to a new publisher, Sheed & Ward, which specialized in Catholic books and aimed to reach a wider public. His first book with them was *Progress and Religion* (1929), which summed up what is perhaps the dominating thesis of all his work:

> The great civilizations of the world do not produce the great religions as a kind of cultural by-product; in a very real sense, the great religions are the foundations on which the great civilizations rest. A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture.[16]

Sheed & Ward was a firm formed by an Australian lawyer, Frank Sheed, and his wife, Maisie, whose maiden name was Ward and who came from an old family of highly intellectual, and one might say "ethereal," Catholics. Their daughter Rosemary told me that Sheed, aware of the difference in their backgrounds,

used to tell his wife jokingly: "I have come to bring some vulgarity into your life."

To call him a lawyer, however, is perhaps deceptive. Although he had trained as a barrister in Australia, he chose not to practice. Instead, he put his dialectical skills to a different use in London by regularly speaking on a soapbox at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park for an organization called the Catholic Evidence Guild.

My mother remembers Sheed fondly, describing him as "blunt, outgoing and with great apostolic zeal." In a lecture for The Keys Society (a society for Catholic writers and journalists founded by G. K. Chesterton), she recalls:

> I remember [Sheed] as one of the great figures of my childhood, visiting us in all the lonely outposts we lived. He once came down to Dawlish where we lived in Devon by the milk-train, had a few hours' sleep on the cliffs by the sea and turned up in time for breakfast. For us children he had great entertainment value for he used to sit at the piano singing "Waltzing Matilda" and bouncing up and down to the music.
>
> Once he and Maisie came to see us in Yorkshire in an amazing car with a dickey seat (an extra folding seat at the back of the vehicle). On the way home it blew up, so he drove it into a farmyard and abandoned it—meanwhile Maisie was scrabbling in the dickey seat trying to rescue the manuscript of her book on Wilfrid Ward, her father.

Sheed's daughter, Rosemary, said of him:

> He was a wonderful man, for all those who met him. When he died, many people contacted me to say what a wonderful person he was and how much they would miss him. He was very funny and very good with people. Once when he was very old, he was staying with me and I took him up an early morning cup of tea in bed. I said "You look very cozy there," and he replied, "Like a rose embower'd, my dear, in

> its own green leaves." [English majors among you will recognize this as a quotation from Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark."]

Dawson's next major works for Sheed & Ward were *The Making of Europe*, which is perhaps the best known of all his books, *Medieval Religion*, based on a series of lectures he gave at Liverpool, and *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, published in 1933, which Dawson himself regarded as his best work.

From 1933 onward, Dawson began to write a number of political works, impelled to do so by the darkening political situation before and during the Second World War. These included *Religion and the Modern State*, *Beyond Politics*, and several essays subsequently published as books: *The Modern Dilemma*, *Christianity and the New Age*, and *The Judgment of the Nations*. In the last of these, he writes of his own view of the Second World War:

> We are passing through one of the great turning points of history. … We see all the resources of science and technology of which we were so proud devoted methodically to the destruction of the world. And behind this material destruction there are even greater evils, the loss of freedom and the loss of hope, the enslavement of whole people to an inhuman order of violence and oppression. Yet however dark the prospect appears we know that the ultimate decision does not rest with man but with God and that it is not his will to leave humanity to its own destructive impulse or to the slavery of the powers of evil.[17]

This was also a time of great change in his own circumstances. In 1933, his father died and he inherited his house and estate in Yorkshire. At the same time the chair of philosophy and the history of religion at Leeds University fell vacant, and he was invited to apply for the post. So he decided to move up to his father's old home, Hartlington Hall, and applied for this job, for which he seemed perfectly suited. He had recommendations from the

distinguished historian H. A. L. Fisher, the vice-chancellor of Manchester University and the principal of University College Exeter, among others. Ernest Barker, his tutor at Oxford, extolled him as "a man and a scholar of the same sort of quality as Acton and Von Hügel." But in the end his application was unsuccessful. The reason was almost certainly his religion, as there were a number of Anglican bishops who were very much against the appointment of a Catholic to such an important position.

This disappointment, coupled with the isolation he experienced in Yorkshire, as well as the cold climate, combined with other factors to bring him to a very low state. My mother said that he suffered from a combination of heart strain, insomnia, and severe depression. When I asked my father what he believed to be the underlying cause of Dawson's depression, from which he suffered intermittently throughout his life, he replied:

> I think it was partly oversensitivity and worrying all the time, about what other people would think of his books and how he wasn't getting the treatment he ought to have had … and also a genuine—and justified—worry about what was happening in the world.

He went down to Sidmouth in Devon to recuperate and spent a lot of time there with the artist and poet David Jones, who was also recovering from a nervous breakdown. They used to go for walks together and discuss Welsh literature, Celtic mythology, and the traditions of Greece and Rome. Jones was very appreciative of Dawson, and we can see through their friendship what attracted people to him, even if at times he could be difficult. When he shared intellectual interests with someone he could be a fascinating conversationalist—not only because he knew so much but also because he had a fiery and powerful mind, very different from his physical invalidity. A friend of Jones's, after meeting Dawson as they walked along the sea front, remarked: "My God, what a tiger!"—in allusion to his fierce intellect. Rosemary Middleton confirmed this: "Both my parents thought of him as someone who

knew about absolutely everything. … Everyone thought of him as a kind of god in a way because he had this fantastic mind which nobody else had." She reminded me of a passage in Sheed's book *The Church and I* in which the following incident is recounted to illustrate Dawson's immense learning:

> I had remarked that Hormisdas was the only Pope whose son became Pope: he seemed surprised, asked was I sure, checked and found that it was so: he asked me how I had happened to know: I said, "You told me." That slip apart, his memory was close to infallible—I imagine because each new thing learned found its place in a mental structure he has spent his whole life building.[18]

In 1940, Dawson became editor of the *Dublin Review* and moved to Boar's Hill near Oxford. He and Valery remained there for about thirteen years, the longest they had ever been in any one place.

In the same year he was invited to be vice-president of a wartime movement called the Sword of the Spirit founded by Cardinal Hinsley and intended to unite all men of good will against totalitarianism.

However, both of these enterprises brought him many difficulties. After Cardinal Hinsley's death in 1943 he was ousted from the *Dublin Review* by Douglas Jerrold, who regarded him as insufficiently right wing, while the Sword of the Spirit was brought to a standstill by Dr. Amigo, Bishop of Southwark, who was against any kind of collaboration with non-Catholics. All of this was very depressing for Dawson, who was very ecumenical in outlook and very much against the politicization of religion.

Rosemary Middleton remarked:

> In Christina's account of the whole Sword of the Spirit thing, you can see that that would have depressed anybody, because Christopher had been really involved in the whole starting up of it, and it was to be ecumenical, and then this

> wretched archbishop said Catholics shouldn't be joining in with other people, because people might think that they agreed with them; they couldn't say the Lord's Prayer together because they meant something different by it; and he stopped it all; and Christopher had really done a lot of work for that; and I think something like that would make you depressed if you were already inclined in that direction.

In spite of these setbacks and strains, Dawson was becoming increasingly well-known and respected. In 1945 he received a letter from Edinburgh University offering him the post of Gifford lecturer for 1946–1947, which he accepted with some trepidation. A year into the term, he was near the point of tendering his resignation because he felt he was not specialized enough but was firmly dissuaded from doing so and duly delivered the lectures, which were subsequently published in two volumes, *Religion and Culture* and *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, and have recently been put online by the Templeton Foundation. Over the next ten years he did a considerable amount of lecturing, broadcasting, and reviewing. His broadcasting included contributions to a series for the BBC entitled *The Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*. Perhaps inspired by this, he then wrote his semiautobiographical work *Tradition and Inheritance: Memories of a Victorian Childhood*, which I mentioned earlier.

In 1953, an American history teacher who much admired Dawson's work, John Mulloy, came to visit Dawson and discussed bringing together a large body of his work in an American publication to be called *The Dynamics of World History*, which helped to broaden his reputation with the American public. In the same year, he and Valery moved to Budleigh Salterton in Devon, and in 1958 he was offered the guest professorship of Roman Catholic studies at Harvard, endowed by the Catholic millionaire Chauncey Stillman.

My father recalled:

> The American appointment—a new chair at Harvard—was a great boost to Christopher. He felt that at last he had

> received proper acknowledgement. But he demanded to take about 4,000 of his own books with him, thinking that Harvard's resources would not be sufficient, and Harvard meekly agreed to pay for the transport of them.
>
> This offer by Chauncey Stillman, to become the first professor of Roman Catholic studies at Harvard, was both a godsend and a curse in a way, because he loved it there and was terribly excited about going, but unfortunately he was a hopeless speaker. He used to have chaps to more or less read his lectures for him. … But he had four very nice years there, I think, out of five, and then he had this stroke and collapsed. I remember seeing him on his return, being wheeled down the platform at Liverpool Street Station after coming off the ship, and being shocked at how frail he looked.

Having heard the name Chauncey Stillman a lot when I was a child, I took the opportunity to ask my father what he was like. He replied:

> Chauncey was a very nice man, and a dyed-in-the-wool old-style Catholic. The Second Vatican Council started when Chauncey was still very much around and he had very little time for it. One of your grandfather's assistants when he was at Harvard later wanted to be invited to lunch when your mother and your uncle Philip were staying with Chauncey after your grandfather's death, and Chauncey disapproved of him so much that he would not appear at the table and only reappeared when he had gone. So to that extent Chauncey and Christopher Dawson were well matched. … By the terms of the grant he had made, Chauncey didn't have any say, after Dawson, on who would be elected to the chair, so a whole string of people of Vatican Two or post-Vatican Two persuasion were elected one after the other, who would not have met with his approval.

My grandfather returned from the United States in 1962 and, because of the strokes he had suffered, was unable to write, but with the help of his old friend, Edward Watkin, he managed to get the first two volumes of his Harvard lectures into book form, *The Dividing of Christendom* and *The Formation of Christendom*, both of which were published by Sheed & Ward. He died of a heart attack in 1970, at the age of eighty-one, amazing for someone who had been ill for much of his life, not to mention smoking about sixty cigarettes a day, although, as my mother used to tell us, "he did not inhale."

I would like to end by quoting my father's views on the value of Dawson's work. My father read history at Cambridge and has spent all his working life in the literary world, having been a journalist, publisher, and literary agent. When I asked him what he thought of Dawson's books from a literary and intellectual point of view, his answer was as follows:

> He has lasted, whereas most of those conventional dons of the time are completely forgotten. I was recently trying to read a book by a historian who in my youth I thought was very admirable, E. F. Powicke, and he wrote a book on the fifteenth century in the *Oxford History of England* series. I tried to read it again the other day and I thought it was absolutely unreadable. Although your grandfather's books *are* readable, you have to pay attention, but if you do they are truly fascinating. He's talking about something of lasting importance, enlightening you on all sorts of subjects, depending on the book.
>
> Christopher Dawson wrote a sort of philosophical history that depends very much on having a set of ideas about the world or the period you're writing about and if those ideas continue to stand up people will go on reading about them. And the thing about your grandfather is that he was never dry in a sort of academic, pedantic way at all. That's why I think he goes on having a good following in different parts of the world where people are actually as

> interested in ideas as in mere facts. Also, facts are inclined to be challenged after a time, to be found wanting or inaccurate when new ones are discovered, whereas if you are writing about ideas and movements, that's a subject which is less vulnerable to the ravages of time.

I have found this to be very true in my own readings of my grandfather's works, and I sincerely hope he will continue to stimulate readers in the future and inspire them to think about history from a spiritual perspective.

Julian Scott

Endnotes

1. This lecture was given at the University of St. Thomas in April 2011 under the auspices of the Center for Catholic Studies.
2. Bradley J. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press Books, 2007); Magdelen Goffin, *The Watkin Path* (Eastbourne, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2006).
3. The notebook remains unpublished, residing in our family archives.
4. *Tradition and Inheritance* was first published in two parts, appearing in *The Wind and the Rain* vol. V, no. 4 (Spring, 1949), 210–218 and *The Wind and the Rain* vol. VI, no. 1 (Summer, 1949), 7–17.
5. Christina Scott, *A Historian and His World* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1984), 37.
6. Ibid., 110.
7. Ibid., 44.
8. Joseph T. Stuart, "Yorkshire Days in Edwardian England: E. I. Watkin's Diary and His Friendship with Christopher Dawson," *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* LXXXIV, no. 1 (2012): 205–223.
9. Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 50-51.
10. Ibid., 49.
11. Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1936), 2–3.
12. "The Nature and Destiny of Man" [1920] is from this period. This essay was later published in Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2011), 256–286.
13. Maisie Ward, *Unfinished Business* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1964), 117.
14. Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 173–174.

15. Ward, *Unfinished Business*, 117.
16. Quoted in, Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 89.
17. Christopher Dawson, *The Judgment of the Nations* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 149–150.
18. Frank Sheed, *The Church and I* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 123.

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Christianity and Western Civilization

An Introduction to Christopher Dawson's *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*

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The Christian faith is a unique cornerstone of Western culture. It presided over the decline and collapse of the Roman Empire, from the migrations, invasions, and demographic shifts of the early medieval period, to the rise of urban centers and organized commerce. Through its many institutions, missionary activities, monasteries, religious orders, and universities, the Christian faith formed European culture and introduced a universal religion that would forever change the world. Many today, however, especially within the West, have begun to doubt Christianity's importance to Western civilization. There is no better time to take a step back and reassess the vital role of Christianity in forming our cultural inheritance. Thankfully we have the work of Christopher Dawson to assist us. Dawson, who has been called "the greatest English-speaking Catholic historian of the twentieth century,"[1] analyzes the enormity of the contribution of Christianity to the West while questioning the value of secularism.[2] For Dawson, the West can neither survive without the transformative qualities derived from the Christian faith nor be properly understood apart from its Christian foundations.[3]

This article does not seek to break new ground but to introduce the reader, approaching Dawson's thought for the first time, to *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, the substance of Dawson's Gifford Lectures of 1948–1949. What originated as a series of lectures has now become a classic text in the history of ideas and represents Dawson's pivotal engagement with his

subject.[4] The picture that I paint traces the main thread of Dawson's discussion throughout these lectures. Although I focus primarily on *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, I frequently reference several of his other essays and books in order to situate these lectures within the broader context of his work. This is no easy task, but I will achieve my aim if I encourage a few readers to delve further into Dawson's work.[5]

Why and How to Study Western Culture: Challenges and Opportunities

Dawson begins *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* from the observation that Christian culture is "the culture to which we all in some sense belong."[6] Christianity is the foundation of our civilization and forms a shared history that helps to connect generations to one another.[7] Familiarity, however, breeds contempt and self-forgetting. In his 1956 essay "Civilization in Crisis," Dawson laments:

> [w]e have become accustomed to taking the secular character of modern civilization for granted. We have most of us never known anything else and consequently we are apt to think that this is a natural and normal state of things, so that whatever our own beliefs may be, we do not expect modern civilization to pay much attention to religion, still less to be *based* upon a religious conception of existence.[8]

Indeed, according to Dawson, we today have forgotten how past civilization "was *not* just a highly organized form of social existence with its industry and art and scientific technique, it was *both* social *and* religious."[9] Yet our modern secular "civilization has cut adrift from its old [religious] moorings and is floating on a tide of change."[10] As civilization becomes materially richer and more technologically advanced, it tends to become spiritually impoverished and increasingly more secularized. A decline in religious culture, however, leaves a spiritual void no secular alternative can fill. According to Dawson, the modern goal to transform secularization into a poor

"substitute for religion" is one such failure.[11] But no modern political alternative—be it nationalism, liberal Capitalism, or Marxism—can satisfy man's deepest spiritual nature, which Dawson understands as "a free personality, the creature of God and the maker of his own destiny."[12] Consequently, Dawson argues that without a religion, a secular society is destined to collapse sooner or later:

> The loss of the historic religion of a society is a sign that it is undergoing a process of social disintegration.... We cannot ... assume the possibility of a culture continuing to preserve its unity and to persist indefinitely without any religious form whatsoever. When the process of secularization is completed, the process of social dissolution is consummated and the culture comes to an end.[13]

As Bradley J. Birzer points out, by the late 1940s, "Dawson believed two things were necessary if the West was to survive. First, [Dawson] believed that the [contemporary] world" is on the verge of forgetting "the principles of Christendom and Western civilization," and is, therefore, in need of a spiritual renewal. "Second, that ... Christendom would only be rebuilt through education."[14] For Dawson, the task of Christian education today is to retrieve our religious heritage and "to restore contact between religion and modern society—between the world of spiritual reality and the world of social experience."[15] The study of our Western religious heritage, then, is at its deepest level an attempt at cultural renewal rather than a mere antiquarian exercise. As Dawson puts it in a public speech in 1961, "I believe that Western civilization can only be saved ... by redirecting the whole system (of education) towards its spiritual end."[16] And the aim of the "Christian College, therefore, must be the cornerstone of any attempt to rebuild the order of Western civilization."[17] In other words, we study the past not only to learn *about* it but also to learn *from* it and to renew our spiritual well-being.

Dawson situates his approach to the study of Western Christian culture in relation to the fragmented specializations characteristic

of modern historiography, the humanities, and the social sciences. The specialized methods of "the scientific historian has concentrated" largely on the "criticism of sources and documents" on the one hand, while "the student of Christianity has devoted himself to the history of dogma and ecclesiastical institutions."[18] As a result, "we have a number of highly developed separate studies—political history, constitutional history, and economic history, on the one side, and ecclesiastical history, the history of dogma, and liturgiology on the other."[19] Specialization, however, has created academic silos among the disciplines "that we have to unite and bring together" if we wish to gain an adequate knowledge of Christian culture. Moreover, the "vital … creative interaction of religion and culture in the life of Western society has been left out and almost forgotten, since from its nature it has no place in the organized scheme of specialized disciplines."[20] In his essay "Civilization in Crisis," Dawson bemoans how we have forgotten "that all civilizations have always been religious—and not only civilizations but barbarian and primitive societies also."[21] As he puts it in *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture*, history is "the cumulative results of a number of *spiritual* decisions—the faith and insight, or the refusal and blindness, of individuals."[22] For Dawson, the task of the historian is to bring the relationship between a religious way of life and academic study together in order to understand Christian culture as living, spiritual community.[23] In his essay "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity," Dawson puts it this way:

> [I]f we are to make the ordinary man aware of the spiritual unity out of which all the separate activities of our civilization have arisen, it is necessary in the first place to look at Western civilization as a whole and to treat it with the same objective appreciation and respect which the humanists of the past devoted to the civilization of antiquity.[24]

Specialization is only one obstacle to our cultural renewal. The rise of conflicting political ideologies and ideological theories in the last several centuries have clouded our vision of the past and have

also provided dangerous and violent dictatorships with powerful theories of history, such as the use of Marxian doctrine of historical materialism to justify social engineering and political activism of a wide variety. Modern totalitarian states attempt to use "history, or a particular version of history, for social ends, as a means to change men's lives and actions."[25] The quest for the social engineering of human behavior through a pretense of social justice has armed new totalitarian states with powerful ideas and means to "create historical myths as a psychological basis of social unity."[26] As a result, "history and social philosophy are being distorted and debased by political propaganda and party feeling."[27] As James Ambrose Raftis points out, Dawson clearly saw "how national history became the theology of nationalism, and the historian the theologian of nationalism."[28] As such, Dawson's approach to history is at odds with nineteenth-century historiography, which, according to Dawson,

> has been written from the nationalist point of view … [and] are often manuals of nationalist propaganda.… In the course of the nineteenth century this movement permeated the popular consciousness and determined the ordinary man's conception of history.… And the result is that each nation claims for itself a cultural unity and self-sufficiency that it does not possess.[29]

The politicization of the study of history and culture is the inevitable result of an increasing awareness on the part of the general public to the significance of history and culture toward social cohesion. According to Dawson, however, "it is of vital importance that the gap between the popular political interests in these questions and the scientific and philosophic study of them should not be too wide."[30] Why should this be? For Dawson, the result of this growing politicization of history has been that "no one is left to criticize the official ideology which is imposed on the community … by the bureaucratic control of education, information and publicity."[31] Increased specialization within higher education creates a dangerous situation in which intellectual and religious

freedom within both academia and society is threatened by government control. In a passage worth quoting at length, Dawson issues the following warning:

> It would be a strange fatality if the great revolution by which Western man has subdued nature to his purposes should end in the loss of his own spiritual freedom, but this might well happen if an increasing technical control of the state over the life and thought of its members should coincide with a qualitative decline in the standards of our culture. An ideology in the modern sense of the word is very different from a faith, although it is intended to fulfill the same sociological functions. It is the work of man, an instrument by which the conscious political will attempts to mould social tradition to its purpose. But faith looks beyond the world of man and his works; it introduces man to a higher and more universal range of reality than the finite and temporal world to which the state and the economic order belong. And thereby it introduces into human life an element of spiritual freedom which may have a creative and transforming influence on man's social culture and historical destiny as well as on his inner personal experience. If therefore we study a culture as a whole, we shall find there is an intimate relation between its religious faith and its social achievement. Even a religion which is explicitly otherworldly and appears to deny all the values and standards of human society may, nevertheless, exert a dynamic influence on culture and provide the driving forces in movements of social change.[32]

In other words, whereas ideology and faith fulfill the same sociological functions of transforming social change, faith is otherworldly in its ultimate goals and its influence on society is secondary to its spiritual mission. The focus on a transcendent realm beyond the finite and temporal secular concerns of politics and economics nevertheless exerts a rich and dynamic influence on

culture that has been one of the hallmarks of the activity of the Western Christian mind: "For, side by side with the natural aggressiveness and the lust for power and wealth which are so evident in European history, there were also new spiritual forces driving Western man towards a new destiny."[33] As a direct result of this long process of education, the Western synthesis between philosophical and religious life produced a great ferment of change in the Western world, but such a tension has also resulted in the widened capacity of human intelligence and the development of new forms of genius and ability that have enabled the West to "enlarge the bounds of human life," while providing "Christian civilization power to unite the world."[34]

The Religious Origins of Western Culture: The Church and the Barbarians

So far we have sketched Dawson's introduction to his topic and the importance he placed on reconnecting with our Christian heritage, and we have brought to light a few of the challenges he saw along our path toward spiritual renewal. With his opening framework established, Dawson then launches his series of lectures from the beginning (so to speak), where he locates "the beginnings of Western culture … in the new spiritual community which arose from the ruins of the Roman Empire owing to the conversion of the Northern barbarians to the Christian faith."[35] It is here that a new spiritual community centered on the Christian Church "came to the barbarians as the bearer of higher civilization, endowed with the prestige of Roman law and the authority of the Roman name."[36] The breakdown of the political organization of the Roman Empire created a political and social-organizational void, "which no barbarian king or general could fill, and this void was filled by the Church as the teacher and law-giver of the new peoples."[37] It was through its monasteries that the Christian Church's "spiritual initiative of the individual became embodied in a corporate institution which in its turn became the centre of a new movement of transmission."[38]

The barbarians who had destroyed the Empire invaded the Church and grew more vicious and corrupt. In the age of Gregory

of Tours, a climate of "violence and corruption in which rulers set an example of injustice and contempt for the law" prevailed, "and even the barbaric virtues of loyalty and military honor were no longer preserved."[39] Although moral standards were at an all-time low, Dawson points out:

> religion was able to maintain its power only by the awe inspired by its supernatural prestige and the spiritual violence it opposed to the physical violence of barbarism. The fear of the wrath of God and the vengeance of the saints was the only power capable of intimidating the lawless ruffians who were so common among the new ruling class in the semi-barbarous Frankish state.[40]

The Church functioned as a spiritual asylum where all the oppressed—slaves as well as criminals—could find safe haven in the supernatural and spiritual protection the Church offered along with its message of divine judgment and salvation. Protection and hope, along with a moral way of life, provided the faithful with a powerful alternative to corruption and hopelessness.

The Monks of the West and the Formation of the Western Tradition

It was the Church and its monks who preserved and spread the tradition of classical and Christian culture, philosophy, and theology between the fifth and sixth centuries. The monastic schools became the repositories of classical learning and the chief organs of higher intellectual culture in Western Europe. As Dawson puts it in *Formation of Christendom*, each monastery "provided an oasis of peace in a land of war, a cell of Christian culture in a barbarous and semi-pagan world."[41] Indeed, the great social institution by which the Church carried out the work of Christian acculturation and which dominated the whole development of early medieval culture was the *monastic community*."[42] As a result, the monastic spiritual community rose to prominence within the Church and formed a kind of self-contained free society, "independent of external control and based on voluntary membership."[43]

In the West at the time of St. Benedict (c. 480–547) and St. Gregory the Great (c. 540–604), the monastic life fostered highly disciplined and tireless habits that enabled monks to re-cultivate lands that had been deserted and depopulated in the age of the barbarian invasions. As John Henry Newman observes in a well-known passage quoted by Dawson:

> St. Benedict found the world, physical and social, in ruins, and his mission was to restore it in the way not of science, but of nature, not as if setting about to do it, not professing to do it by any set time, or by any rare specific, or by any series of strokes, but so quietly, patiently, gradually, that often till the work was done, it was not known to be doing.... There was no one who contended or cried out, or drew attention to what was going on, but by degrees the woody swamp became a hermitage, a religious house, a farm, an abbey, a village, a seminary, a school of learning and a city.[44]

One of the greatest contributions of the Christian monks to the Church and to the development of the West was the phenomenon of missionary expansion. Northumbria became a center of evangelism and learning and, before it fell to the Viking invasions of the ninth century, Northumbrian culture succeeded in "implanting the seeds of a great revival of religious life and Christian culture on the Continent."[45] In this sense the achievement of the age was "a true renaissance and the starting point of Western culture as conscious unity."[46] The monks not only spread the faith but also served the vital function of preserving classical culture and, therefore, helped to civilize Europe, for "as the darkness deepened over Western Europe it was in the monasteries rather than in the cities that the tradition of Latin culture and the patterns of Christian life were preserved."[47]

The Medieval State and the Expansion of Christendom

The medieval state evolved into a new empire that was essentially a theocratic institution that embodied and reflected "the new conception of Christendom as the ultimate social unity, and the

sacred character of the ruler as the divinely appointed leader of the Christian people."[48] Charlemagne (c. 742–814) had formed a bond between the Papacy and the Frankish monarchy that ultimately led to the end of the Lombard kingdom and

> the destruction of the Byzantine sovereignty over Rome and Ravenna and the recognition of the king of the Franks as the patron and protector of the Holy See. In return, the Pope accepted the control of the Carolingian monarchy over the property and personnel of the Church, and the way was prepared for the establishment of the new Western Empire, which gave constitutional form and ritual consecration to the new relation between the Papacy and the Frankish kingdom.[49]

Implicit in the elaborate ritual and symbolism in the coronation rite, "which was gradually worked out in the evolution of the medieval state," was the conception of "the king as a sacred representative figure, the head of the Christian society, standing between God and the people, bound by reciprocal bonds of loyalty and fidelity to one and the other."[50] As crucial ministers of the same Christian society, both the priest and the king were consecrated by God to serve: "the one to teach and offer sacrifice, the other to rule and judge."[51] The result of this powerful combination of Church and state relations was that the "kingdom of the Franks became the centre towards which all the living forces of Western culture converged: the meeting place of Latin and German elements, and of Mediterranean and Atlantic influences."[52]

The Carolingian Empire attempted to actualize a vast program of social and cultural reconstruction but was constrained by limited "material forces and no technical equipment" and was consequently set back by constant barbarian invasions even more deadly than those of the fifth century.[53] By the tenth century Western Christendom "had become surrounded by a rising flood of barbarism and the leadership of Western culture had passed to Islamic Spain which was then at the height of its prosperity under the

independent Khalifate of Cordova."[54] The monasteries that had contributed so much to the formation of the Carolingian culture and had been the centers of Western culture were particularly exposed and vulnerable to barbarian attacks. The eventual collapse of the Carolingian Empire resulted in the end of the great Celtic Christian culture. The rulers descended from Charlemagne were no longer able to defend Europe against raiders from Scandinavia and North Africa. The task of defending Europe fell to local rulers, such as "Eudes, the Count of Paris, in France, Arnulf in Germany, Rudolf in Burgundy, and Guy of Spoleto in Italy. These kings derived their authority from their military leadership and their power to protect their country from inroads of the barbarians."[55] This period inaugurated the beginning of feudalism and marked the end of any hope that the Christian West might have had of reestablishing a centralized government such as the Romans had achieved. Caught up in whatever means necessary to survive, Europe's dream of bringing back some golden age was dashed.

Although the Scandinavians were at one point a serious threat to Western Christendom, they were eventually converted to Christianity by the "culmination of the process of expansion and cultural interchange which had accompanied the Viking movement."[56] As a result, the "mixed culture of the Christian Viking states across the seas reacted on the culture of the Scandinavian homelands alike in religion and politics … and seemed for a time as though the whole of the Nordic culture area from the British Isles to the Baltic would be united in a northern Christian empire under the sovereignty of the Danish king."[57] This new formation of national unity gave birth to a new wave of "Scandinavian mercenaries and Icelandic poets" who "brought the Northern lands for the first time into real contact with the international life of Western Christendom."[58] Indeed, it was, above all, "in Iceland that the scholars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries … founded the great school of vernacular historiography and archaeology to which we owe so much of our knowledge of the past."[59]

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the conversion of Russia resulted in Christian culture taking root in Eastern Europe, which

paved the way for Christianity and the new Christian Eastern Europe to become "the meeting place of two independent currents of Christian culture; and while Byzantine influences were spreading northwards, Western Christendom was expanding eastwards through Central Europe, and new Christian states were arising in the valleys of the Elbe, the Vistula and the Danube."[60] The continent became a Christian *orbis terrarium*. This same age saw both the revival and expansion of the Byzantine Church along with a rebirth of the tradition of Carolingian imperialism under the new Germanic Empire of Otto I and his successors, who contributed to the spread of Christianity.

The Reform of the Church in the Eleventh Century and the Medieval Papacy

After the breakdown of the Carolingian Empire, the most serious threat to Christendom was the "internal disintegration due to the exploitation and secularization of the Church by the leaders of the new feudal society."[61] Abbeys and bishoprics lost their special social status and were treated in the same way as lay fiefs and were "appropriated by violence; they were bought and sold or used as rewards for successful military adventures."[62] Once again, however, "as in the fifth and sixth centuries, Christianity showed its independence," resilience, and "power to create new organs of spiritual regeneration."[63] A new movement arose from within the monasteries in the midst of the feudal society to meet the new threats of feudal secularization of the Church.

At first, this movement was purely monastic and ascetic. It took the form of a total renunciation of worldly concerns and public life in favor of the isolated life of the desert and the cloister, "a repetition in different circumstances of the first great movement of Western monasticism."[64] The new spiritual monasteries were formed by feudal princes or converted nobles, like Cluny in Burgundy (c. 910), "Brogne and Gorze in Lorraine and Camaldoli in Tuscany (1009)," who laid the foundations for a new monastic movement that would spiritually reform and transform the medieval Church.[65] The monks returned to the observance of the

Benedictine Rule. They "were not mere self-centered ascetics, but prophets of righteousness who defended the weak and oppressed and spoke boldly against the evil in high places."[66]

This new movement gained momentum and continued well into the eleventh century, during which it had attained its maturity "and began to affect every aspect of Western culture."[67] The key players and leaders of this age were the great abbots of the movement, such as St. Odilo of Cluny (994–1019), St. Poppo of Stavelot (977–1048), and St. William of Volpiano (990–1031), who, as the dominant figures of the age, "exercised an immense influence on contemporary rulers."[68] As the new monasteries gained power, so too did Christianity. The sense "of the new unity of Christendom was stronger than ever and demanded a new institutional expression," which the reformed Papacy was able to provide "more effectively than any political institution could have done, since it transcended national and territorial rivalries and possessed in the hierarchy and the Canon Law the necessary instruments for its realization."[69]

The emancipation of the "Papacy from its dependence on the Empire and the separation of the spiritual authority of the bishop from his secular obligations" meant that the Papacy had become an autonomous center of authority liberated from the feudal hierarchy.[70] As a result, it became necessary for the Papacy "to reconstruct the whole order of ecclesiastical administration and jurisdiction as an organized unity."[71] Consequently, the reformed Papacy transformed the structure of the Western Church along with the character and spirit of Western Culture.[72]

The Feudal World: Spiritual Revival and the Crusades

The movement of reform in the eleventh century was no longer limited to the monastic life "but had become the inspiration of a wider movement of spiritual change which transformed the order of the Western Church and the spirit of Western culture."[73] The center of political life in medieval society was not the kingdom but the new feudal states that had arisen out of the "ruins of the Carolingian state by rebellious vassals or successful military

adventurers."[74] Although these states had been formed by war for the purpose of war, they became an important source for social activity. A revival of religious, intellectual, and artistic expression soon followed. For example, Northern France "had achieved a new fusion or synthesis between the Christian and the barbarian elements in medieval culture."[75] Although Christian and barbarous warrior elements had coexisted, "they did not form an organic unity. They remained two separate worlds—on the one side, the peace society of the Church, which found its centre in the monastic life and culture; on the other, the warrior society of the Western barbarians, which remained pagan at the heart in spite of the external and partial acceptance of Christianity."[76] Now, by contrast, we witness "the translation into specifically Christian forms of the spirit of the old Northern warrior tradition, so that the dualism which had been characteristic of Western Europe during the last four or five centuries was at last transcended."[77]

Characteristic of the literary expression of these new feudal states were the *chansons de geste* (songs of heroic deeds), which were based on genuine heroic historic times and dealt with historic persons. The subject matter of epic *chansons de geste* was mainly the celebrations of the war of the Christians against the infidels.[78] The poetic sentiments expressed in the new epic genre were religious rather than political or patriotic, since their appeal was not related to any existing state but to "the wider society of Christendom as a whole, and thereby it introduces a new spiritual element into the barbarian warrior culture."[79]

The new feudal relationship between the religious and warrior elements also transformed the notion of the knighthood. The social bond between the knight and his lord was moralized by attributing higher religious motives to the knights, who were now detached from their barbarian and pagan backgrounds and integrated into the social structure of the Christian culture, "so that [the knight] was regarded as one of the three indispensable organs of society, like the priest and the peasant, each of whom … needs the services of the other as members of one body."[80] Emancipated from their pagan warrior backgrounds, these knights now became consecrated

warriors who swore allegiance to their Christian lords. Their obedience and code of conduct became the ideals of chivalry that formed Christian knight-warriors who served to protect and defend the Church and its followers.

The new warrior spirit was too powerful and prevalent in medieval society to be suppressed. The Church sought "to find a new outlet for the warlike energies of feudal society by turning them against the external enemies of Christendom."[81] The proclamation of the crusade for the recapture of Jerusalem by Urban II at the council of Clermont in 1093 generated "a wave of religious enthusiasm which was none the less real because it also appealed to the natural instincts of the unregenerate feudal warrior."[82]

The Crusades had for the first time in the history of feudal society created a purpose that transcended local parochialism, which in turn "united Western Christendom in a common enterprise under the leadership of the Church."[83] The wave of popular excitement of the Crusades ignited religious fervor and marked "a turning point in the history of the West: ending the long centuries of weakness and isolation and cultural inferiority and bringing the new peoples of Western Christendom back to the old centres of Eastern Mediterranean culture."[84]

While religious ideals continued to find expression in Western culture, there also arose a courtly secular culture that was "a kind of anti-crusade, a propagandist movement for the development of a new secular aristocratic culture, which travelled in the opposite direction of the Crusades."[85] By the second half of the twelfth century, this new countercultural movement found expression in the music, romantic poetry, and literature that "arose at the Angevin court and in the courts of Northern France and Flanders and the western and southern German lands."[86] This new courtly poetry, a direct contrast to the religiously inspired *chansons de geste*, celebrated the virtues of courtesy and love that paved the way for a new hedonistic way of life that gained influence over society as "the secularization of chivalry was increased both by the loss of the crusading ideal and by the increasing wealth and luxury of Western court life."[87]

The Medieval City: Guilds and Universities

The rebirth of the medieval city from the twelfth century onward transformed the economic and social life of Western Europe. The medieval city of this period, however, was a new creation unlike the cities of antiquity or those of modern times: "this new type of European city had considerable influence on the religious development of Europe during these formative centuries."[88] Indeed, "it was the medieval city which first provided the favourable conditions for a thorough-going Christianization of social life."[89]

It was in a new atmosphere of economic renaissance and the expansion of commercial life that the new medieval city produced a new taste in art. Although the new medieval city depended on a revival of commerce and industrial activity, the new art of this period was also inspired by a new spiritual revival that to a considerable extent predated the economic revival. The rise of a growing merchant class and economic opportunity and wealth fostered personal freedom and a flowering of religious culture which found expression in Gothic architecture, since it was the growing religious merchant class that helped to finance the monks who had an important share in the early development of building.[90] Structures such as cathedrals, churches, castles, and public buildings were the supreme achievements of the new style, like the city temple of the civic life in antiquity.

The Mediterranean cities were "one of the greatest social creations of the Middle Ages."[91] They were commonwealths and centers of communal life that existed outside the hierarchy of the feudal state. Citizens were bound together in a free association of "religious confraternity of charity under the patronage of a saint for mutual aid" both religiously and materially.[92] This free association of individuals "was the seed of the great flowering of communal life in the merchant and craft guilds which were the most striking feature of medieval urban society."[93] The integration of "corporate organization, economic function, and civic freedom" enabled these cities to become the "most complete embodiment of the social ideals of the Middle Ages."[94]

Changes to the intellectual and educational world of Western culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries ensued. The rise of

the medieval city during the Benedictine age of Western culture witnessed the continuity of the higher culture of learning in the monasteries and abbeys. The Benedictine abbeys were centers of learning and literary production.[95] A revival culture and literary activity fostered new ideals of education and set off the development of ecclesiastical humanism, the primary tradition of higher education and learning in Western culture.[96]

During the thirteenth century, Paris and Bologna exemplified the spirit of the university movement and transformed the educational and intellectual classes that dominated Western culture. The Friars were the primary teachers and leaders of the universities and were at the center of the intellectual life and mission of the Church. It was the creation of universities and the formation "of new religious Orders alike [that] formed part of the far-reaching design of the medieval Papacy for the intellectual organization of Christian civilization, which is one of the most remarkable examples of the planning of culture on a large scale that history has ever seen."[97] For nearly two and a half centuries the Church, through religious reformers like St. Hugh of Cluny, St. Gregory VII, St. Anselm, and St. Bernard, "inspired the revival of Western learning and philosophy and the creation of universities which were founded as international centers of higher study for Western Christendom as a whole."[98]

However, the second half of the thirteenth century, generally regarded as the high point of medieval culture, also marks a turning point and crisis. For three centuries the development of Western Europe had been moving in a direction of a "unity of Christendom and the creation of an intellectual and spiritual synthesis."[99] By the second half of the thirteenth century, however, this movement reversed "and a centrifugal process [began] which continues throughout the later Middle Ages until it culminates in the religious division and social changes of the sixteenth century."[100] From the end of the thirteenth century the international unity of Western Christendom had begun to collapse. During the last two centuries of what Dawson calls the Fourth Age of the Church, this disintegration revealed itself "in the defeat of the Papacy by the new

national monarchies, like that of Philip IV of France, and in the rise of new revolutionary movements of reform, like the Wycliffites and the Hussites, and finally by the Great Schism in the Papacy itself."[101] The decline of the unifying energy of medieval culture resulted in "the end of the crusading states and the destruction of the great crusading Order," as the crusading ideal had been "discredited and secularized by its use as a political weapon against Christian states like the Empire and the Kingdom of Aragon."[102]According to Dawson, however, the destruction of the Templars by Philip IV "was far more serious, since it marked the complete victory of the temporal power of the new monarchy over the international elements of medieval society."[103] As he puts it:

> The imposing structure of medieval Christendom which had been built up by the idealism of the reforming movement, the organizing power of the Papacy, and the devotion of the religious Orders proved powerless to withstand the determined attack of a handful of unscrupulous officials like Guillaume de Nogaret and Pierre Flotte, who were the servants of the new monarchy and understood how to exploit the new techniques of power in a ruthlessly totalitarian fashion.[104]

These and many other developments, such as the attempt to overcome the Great Schism by the Conciliar movement, inaugurated what Dawson refers to as the Fifth Age of the Church, a period of crisis that threatened the unity and even the existence of Western Christendom.[105] The Church and Christendom came under the direct attack of both the theological and ecclesiastical challenge of the Protestant Reformation and by the cultural challenge of the new lay culture of the Italian Renaissance, "which had replaced the theological and philosophical traditions of the medieval universities."[106] The Church's counter reaction to the Protestant Reformation and the secular humanism of the Renaissance produced the Catholic Baroque culture and Counter-Reformation, which resulted in a new form of Christian humanist culture and

education. These new developments peaked in the first half of the seventeenth century and launched the age of Baroque culture "which dominated the artistic and intellectual life of Europe."[107] The success of the Baroque culture, however, was short lived. It was too dependent, like the Catholic revival itself, on Catholic monarchies, such as the Hapsburg monarchies in Spain and Austria. When these monarchies declined, "the Baroque culture declined with them," and when the Catholic monarchy of France was destroyed by the French Revolution, "the Church was the first victim of the change … [and] the established order of the Catholic Church was swept away."[108] Here is how Dawson sums up this dark period:

> As the armies of the French Revolution advanced through Europe … the monasteries and universities were destroyed, church property was confiscated and the Pope himself was deported to France as political prisoner. In the eyes of secular opinion, the Catholic Church has been abolished as a super annuated relic of the dead past.[109]

Thus began what Dawson refers to as the Sixth Age of the Church, a period of time in which the Church found itself in an atmosphere of defeat and crisis. Everything from the religious orders and the monasteries to the Catholic universities and missionary activities had to be built up from the foundations, as each "had been destroyed or reduced to poverty and impotence."[110] Yet, despite being "associated with the unpopular cause of political reaction and the tradition of the *ancien regime*," the Church did recover and a Catholic revival of Catholicism finally took place, so that by 1850 the Church was in a stronger position than it had been a hundred years before.[111] While the revival began in France during the French Revolution, "the exiled French clergy contributed to the creation or restoration of Catholicism in England and America."[112] For Dawson, the entire history of Catholicism in the United States "belongs to this sixth age and is in many aspects typical of the new conditions of the period."[113] At present, according to

Dawson, Catholicism in America rather than the European pattern is "the normal condition of the Church everywhere."[114] Catholicism in the United States is essentially urban, whereas Catholicism in Europe was firmly rooted in the peasantry. Moreover, from the very beginning Catholicism in the United States has been entirely and vigorously independent of the state "and has not been restricted by the complex regime of concordats which was the dominant pattern of European Catholicism in the nineteenth century."[115] The story of the Church, however, is far from over. As Dawson states:

> I have spoken of the Six Ages of the Church—there may be sixty before the universal mission of the Church is completed. But each age has its own peculiar vocation which can never be replaced, and each, to paraphrase [Leopold von] Ranke's famous saying, stands in a direct relation to God and answers to Him alone for its achievements and its failure. Each, too, bears its own irreplaceable witness to the faith of all.[116]

Conclusion

Dawson concludes *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* with a vernacular poem by William Langland ("Piers Plowman"), written during the Hundred Years' War, a time of great political and social upheaval in the Catholic Church. For Dawson, Langland's poem describes the triumph of spirituality in the common life of the Christian and sums up the medieval ideal of the essential fusion of religion and culture. In Langland's poem, Dawson stresses, we see how "religion was not a particular way of life but the way of all life."[117]

Interpreting the rich images of Langland's poem, Dawson observes, "Christianity is the labour of love to which every man is called according to his personal gifts and his social vocation, and the Church is the community of love—the house of unity into which the harvest of humanity is brought."[118] According to Dawson, Langland's poem points to how the labor of the Church brought a

vital spiritual inheritance to the West. Langland's poem is "itself a proof that all was not lost; that the labour of seven hundred years has not been in vain."[119] The external order the centuries of Christianity created or attempted to create pale in significance when compared to "the internal change which can never be entirely undone except by the total negation or destruction of Western man himself."[120]

The vital fusion between religion and culture profoundly shaped medieval history and modern Western identity. From the modest beginnings of missionaries and monasteries, to the papal reform, religious revival, and the Crusades, to the rise of guilds and universities, time and again Christianity survived and reshaped Western civilization. Religious motivations and expressions of piety were vital forces that brought about the progress and change in society that have become an integral part of our identity and have formed the inner life and character of the Western mind. Christianity's contribution to our development as a people bequeathed a rich and immense tradition. Any attempt to reconnect with our heritage must begin with a serious study and meditation on our shared common Christian heritage and must accompany a careful analysis of the relation between religion and culture. There is no better place to commence this intellectual journey than the work of Christopher Dawson.

Endnotes

1. Daniel Callahan, "Christopher Dawson," *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (1973): 167.
2. This is a major theme that runs throughout Dawson's work. See Christopher Dawson's essay "Civilization in Crisis," in *Christianity and European Culture: Selections from the Work of Christopher Dawson*, Gerald J. Russello, ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 65–83.
3. Christopher Dawson, "Editorial Note," *Dublin Review* 207 (1940): 1. For an extended treatment of this theme, see Bradley J. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World: The Augustinian Life and Mind of Christopher Dawson* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 2007), 187–204.

4. Dawson authored almost two hundred books and articles. In addition to his *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, which concerns us herein, some of his more famous books include *The Formation of Christendom*; *Religion and the Modern State*; *The Judgment of the Nations*; *The Age of the Gods*; *The Making of Europe*; *Medieval Essays*; and *Progress and Religion.* For a helpful bibliography of Christopher Dawson's books and articles, see Claude Locas, "Christopher Dawson, a Bibliography," in *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (1973): 177–206.
5. For a study of Dawson's life, see Christina Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992). See also Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997) for a treatment of Dawson's intellectual development within the context of a generation of English intellectuals during the twentieth century who converted to Catholicism. See also Adam Schwartz, *The Third Spring: G. K. Chesterton, Graham Greene, Christopher Dawson, and David Jones* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005). Schwartz's comparative analysis of Dawson situates Dawson's thought within the beliefs of Chesterton, Greene, and Jones and within the British Catholic revival of the twentieth century, during which period British Catholicism underwent a crucial intellectual and literary renewal. See also Dermot Quinn, "Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History," in *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History*, Stratford Caldecott and John Morrill, eds. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1997).
6. Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 11.
7. Ibid.
8. Christopher Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis," in *Christianity and European Culture*, 65. Emphasis added.
9. Ibid., 66. Emphasis added.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 68.
12. Christopher Dawson, "The Future of National Government," *The Dublin Review* (1935), 250–251.
13. Quoted in John R. E. Bliese, "Christopher Dawson: His Interpretation of History," *Modern Age* 23 (1979): 260. Original quotation is from Christopher Dawson, *Dynamics of World History*, John J. Mulloy, ed. (New York: Mentor Books, 1962), 105.

14. Bradley J. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 214. Birzer places Dawson's thought within an Augustinian framework.
15. Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis," *Christianity and European Culture*, 75.
16. "'New Apostolate of the Intellect' Is Urged by Christopher Dawson," *Catholic Messenger* 79 (1961): 8.
17. Christopher Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 1989), 150.
18. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 12–13.
19. Ibid., 13.
20. Ibid.
21. Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis," *Christianity and European Culture*, 65.
22. Christopher Dawson, *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture: A Way to the Renewal of Human Life* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), 20. Emphasis added.
23. For a critique of Dawson's approach to history, see Hayden White, "Religion, Culture and Western Civilization in Christopher Dawson's Idea of History," *English Miscellany* 9 (1958): 247–287.
24. Christopher Dawson, "The Recovery of Spiritual Unity," *Christianity and European Culture*, 238.
25. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 13.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. James Ambrose Raftis, "The Development of Christopher Dawson's Thought," *Chesterton Review* 9 (1983): 117.
29. Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe: An Introduction to the History of European Unity* (Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1968), 8.
30. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 14.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 14–15.
33. Ibid., 17.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 26.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 20.
39. Ibid., 32–33.
40. Ibid., 33.
41. Christopher Dawson, *Formation of Christendom* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), 171.
42. Ibid.

43. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 47.
44. Ibid., 53. Original quotation is in John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Historical Sketches, Vol. II* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 210.
45. Ibid., 61.
46. Ibid., 65.
47. Ibid., 43.
48. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 79.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., 82. In his book *The Divine Right of Kings*, John Neville Figgis argues that "it is in the gradual rise of Papal claims to universal supremacy, that are first put forth those notions which form the basis of all theories of Divine Right.… With two powers within the State in the relative positions of Pope and Emperor, it was inevitable that sooner or later there should arise between them a struggle for supremacy." See John Neville Figgis, *Divine Right of Kings* (London; Forgotten Books, 2012), 45.
51. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 79.
52. Ibid., 75.
53. Ibid., 84.
54. Ibid., 84–85.
55. Ibid., 87.
56. Ibid., 95.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid. See also Christopher Dawson, "The Expansion of Christianity," *Commenweal* 69 (1959): 378–380.
59. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 100.
60. Ibid., 114.
61. Ibid., 120.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., 121.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 122.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid., 126.
68. Ibid., 127.
69. Ibid., 134.
70. Ibid., 138.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 140.
73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., 142.
76. Ibid., 142–143.
77. Ibid., 144.
78. Ibid., 145.
79. Ibid., 146.
80. Ibid., 147.
81. Ibid., 149.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., 150.
85. Ibid., 155–156.
86. Ibid., 156.
87. Ibid., 159–160.
88. Ibid., 161.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid., 169.
91. Ibid., 164.
92. Ibid., 170.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., 171.
95. Ibid., 181.
96. Ibid., 184.
97. Ibid., 197.
98. Christopher Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church," in *Christianity and European Culture*, 40–41.
99. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 217.
100. Ibid.
101. Christopher Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church," in *Christianity and European Culture*, 41–42. The "Six Ages of the Church" is a lecture in which Dawson defines the distinctive periods that characterize each age during the centuries the Church dominated. In each age, a problem facing the Church is solved only to give rise to another. In short, the Apostolic Age (first), the Age of the Fathers (second), the Dark Ages (third), the Middle Ages (fourth), the Protestant and Catholic Reformations (fifth), and the Modern Age (sixth) constitute what Dawson refers to as the "Six Ages of the Church." I have limited my discussion of these ages to a brief consideration of the fourth, fifth, and sixth and only insofar as these relate to the main thread of *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*.

102. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 216.
103. Ibid., 216–217.
104. Ibid., 217.
105. Dawson, "The Six Ages of the Church," in *Christianity and European Culture*, 42.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid., 43.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid., 43–44.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid., 45.
117. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 222.
118. Ibid., 223.
119. Ibid., 224.
120. Ibid.

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Dawson, Natural Theology, and the "New Atheism"

Arguments from *Religion and Culture*[1]

Gerald J. Russello

In 1994, German archeologist Klaus Schmidt described the importance of a huge complex in southern Turkey. It is the oldest known example of religious architecture, built thousands of years before the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt. As described in *National Geographic*, its construction would have required "more people coming together in one place than had likely occurred before," and the complex was built before the development of writing, and before the development of techniques such as pottery or even the wheel.[2]

The discoveries have revolutionized early archeology because Gobekli Tepe is apparently almost solely a religious site; there are no habitations nearby and no signs of permanent settlement. Whereas until about thirty years ago many archeologists had assumed religion was a byproduct of other events, such as the rise of agriculture or the settling of nomadic populations into more pastoral settings, Gobekli Tepe seems to demonstrate that religious institutions preceded and indeed may have caused these other phenomena, which led ultimately to the rise of civilization. As Charles C. Mann writes, "the construction of a massive temple by a group of foragers is evidence that organized religion could have come *before* the rise of agriculture and other aspects of civilization. It suggests that the human impulse to gather for sacred rituals arose as humans shifted from seeing themselves as part of the natural world to seeking mastery over it."[3] In other words, as an anthropologist is quoted as saying in the *National Geographic*

article referenced above, the idea that human civilization was shaped by environmental forces, which then generated cultural symbols and rituals to explain it, is backward; rather, "I think that what we are learning is that civilization is a product of the human mind."[4]

Christopher Dawson learned that lesson decades before Gobekli Tepe was excavated. Already, in 1929, Dawson in *Progress and Religion* obliterated the secular progressive theory that religion was simply a byproduct of material forces. Dawson recognized that "[m]odern writers on anthropology and primitive thought have tended to assume that religion is a secondary phenomenon and that man's earliest attitude to reality was a kind of empirical materialism."[5] A student of the then-new discipline of anthropology might note the practice of sun worship among an agricultural people and conclude that the sun was worshiped because people did not know how to guarantee good crops years after year. In compensation, they sought to supplicate something they saw as beyond their power to control. Dawson contended instead that religion was not some "natural" outgrowth of primitive culture or an unsophisticated understanding of physical processes. Dawson turned the argument around. Religion was natural, to be sure; but it was a core human experience, from which culture, society, and even developments such as agriculture proceeded. It deserved to be analyzed in and of itself and not as a byproduct of something else. Dawson contested the then-common opinion of peoples like the Eskimo or Bushmen, whom the theorists of progress considered completely dominated by their physical surroundings. In fact, these cultures were the result "of a free and intelligent activity, and it expresses itself in an art and a folk-lore far richer and more original than that of many more advanced peoples."[6] The spiritual resources of vibrant cultures, Dawson thought, enabled them to transform physical and social limitations to accord with a transcendental vision.

Our own culture again is wrestling with questions of the "source" of religion and whether it has any ultimate or absolute meaning. A series of books over the last decade, written by authors

such as Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchens, have articulated what has been described as the "New Atheism" that challenges the conclusion that writers such as Dawson made concerning religious faith.[7] For the New Atheists, religious faith either is meant as a tool of oppression for use by some groups over others or reflects some earlier development in human evolution that can now be safely discarded. As in centuries past, these New Atheists root many of their arguments in modern science, claiming, for example, that religion developed as a cooperative mechanism or is the evolutionary cue of parental obedience misplaced to a divine father figure.

Dawson did not, of course, have these New Atheists in mind when writing his work. But he was contending with their intellectual ancestors, the anthropologists and sociologists of his own day, such as Sir James Frazer, who thought that the social sciences explained away religion, much as the New Atheists believe the harder sciences do today. As Dawson wrote in 1931, "[a] theory is not regarded as 'scientific' unless it explains religion in terms of something else—as an artificial construction from non-religious elements."[8] Instead, Dawson advocated the uniqueness of religious thought and life and attempted to disentangle the threads of religious experience from those that could be explained by geography, history, or environment. He did not dispute that these factors existed or that they could have an effect on religious and cultural development. He simply denied that material factors alone could be collapsed into, and completely explain, a general theory of human society. Instead, he explored the sense of the transcendent that he found as a common factor across varied groups and time periods and derived from this the conclusion that religious experience cannot be distilled from a set of physical or environmental factors but represented another form of experience.

The Gifford Lectures: *Religion and Culture*

Religion and Culture sets out what is perhaps Dawson's most famous thesis: "Religion is the key of history." The book started as a

set of ten lectures that were presented in 1947 at the University of Edinburgh as part of its prestigious Gifford Lectures. The Gifford Lectures, endowed in 1885, were explicitly meant to address the subject of "natural theology," without reference to "or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation." Dawson later presented a second set of lectures (a rare honor) from 1949 to 1950 that resulted in his book *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*. The first set of lectures, *Religion and Culture*, can be divided into three main sections. The first three lectures address the question of natural theology and its relation to the study of religion as a social or cultural phenomenon. The second part of the book applies Dawson's argument to specific cultural elements as sources of religious knowledge: prophets and divination, priesthood and sacrifice, and kingship. Finally, he turns to the relationship between the divine order in culture and the social order and concludes with a lecture on religion and cultural change. The book, as is the case with much of Dawson's work, proceeds along a twin track: Dawson at once argues for both the reality of religion as a distinct category of human experience, which is mostly a philosophic argument, and also that religion has had a unique place in human culture, which is developed as a historical argument.

In a sense, Dawson was continuing in the Gifford Lectures the critique of modern anthropology he began in 1929. In her introduction to a new edition of *Progress and Religion*, the prominent British anthropologist Mary Douglas gives some sense of Dawson's achievement: Dawson "artfully stages a dialogue between the eighteenth-century philosophers, Condorcet, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel, and the people they thought of as primitive."[9] Religious faith takes on a different perspective if examined from the point of view of these people themselves and not through the prism of anthropological theory. "The thin rationalism [of modern anthropology], which proceeded by arbitrarily separating one level of experience from the next, grossly distorted the subject matter and made a mockery of its pretensions to objectivity."[10] These thinkers saw what they wished to see and ignored the brute fact that "an

obscure and confused intuition of transcendent being" was present in and influenced every so-called primitive culture.[11]

Dawson sets the terms of the debate in his penetrating first lecture, "Natural Theology and the Scientific Study of Religion." The first question Dawson addresses is whether what he calls (following Blaise Pascal) the followers of the god of the philosophers can speak to the followers of the God of Isaac and Jacob. Dawson notes that the presuppositions of the Gifford Lectures—"the existence of a science of Natural Theology which is competent to study the nature of the Divine Being and the relations of man and the universe to him"—is an assertion that "would be denied to-day by most modern philosophers and many modern theologians."[12] Natural theology, Dawson asserts, is the theology of humanism, and the two were joined from the Renaissance to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, during the "centuries when Western Christendom was so profoundly divided by controversy and sectarianism, by religious wars and religious persecutions, it was Humanism which was the chief unifying element in European culture, since it provided the only ground on which the members of the different nations and the different churches could meet on equal terms."[13]

Natural theology was *rational* in that the principles of theology were thought reasonable, intelligible, and demonstrable to others without the articles of a particular faith. Therefore, one need not believe in miracles or transubstantiation, as these were not reducible to neutral explanations evident to normal human reason. Thus, Hume, in the section on miracles in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, argues that miracles by definition violate "the laws of nature" and that those laws of nature are learned from experience of the material world. Because natural theology was rational, its proponents thought it could bridge the divisive sectarian controversies in post-medieval Europe.

Further, natural theology was *dependent* on the longer Christian tradition, although this did not become clear until later. For so long as natural theology maintained its connection with Christian culture, it was able to serve that unifying role that Dawson

identified. But natural theology was open to two attacks: for "in so far as it made God not only the author of Nature but the medium of our understanding and the guarantee of our empirical knowledge, it profoundly changed the traditional character of natural Theology and exposed it to a two fold attack."[14] In the traditional view, God was not, or not only, natural. There was a God who was revealed in nature but also one who fills hearts and minds with spiritual wisdom. But insofar as this new God was simply a guarantor of empirical reality, rather than a participant in that reality, orthodox Christians could attack the aridity of this conception of God. Religious skeptics, too, found this unsatisfactory; they now had free reign to sever the connection between revealed and natural religion. The result of that separation was, initially, Deism, the clockmaker God who had little relation to His creation. But as Dawson notes, this move undermined the very reason for the existence of natural theology, which was to explain God in the light of reason. However, "as soon as Deism broke the vital contact and attempted to make Natural Theology the autonomous principle of a purely rational religion, it was powerless to withstand the disintegrating criticisms of the sceptics."[15] And indeed, the next generation of thinkers, the heirs of Voltaire, Bayle, and Hume, determined one could dispense with God altogether in constructing a rational system for understanding the universe.[16]

Dawson argued that the influence of natural theology faded in the early nineteenth century. New knowledge "came pouring into Europe from the East, from India and Persia, from Egypt and Babylonia, from China and the Far East as well as from Central America and Polynesia." This was the death knell for natural theology because it could not construct rational religious principles based on the wild profusions of religious forms around the world. So instead history, and in particular the comparison of different religious histories, took a more significant place. Now "the only true Natural Theology was the philosophy of history. The great task of the philosopher was to construct an intelligible synthesis in which the successive spiritual achievements of the great world epochs and world religions were shown as stages in the progressive

self-revelation of the Absolute Spirit." In some sense, this construction of religion moving through various stages to reach perfection resembles some nineteenth-century philosophies of history, where the historical process itself reflects the gradual unfolding of a "world spirit." But Dawson takes us in another direction, that of anthropology and comparative religion. These new fields of inquiry enforced a separation of "the facts of man's religious development," while they "abstain[ed] from theological and philosophical judgments."[17] Objective religious scholarship in the modern sense was born.

To phrase this transition in another way, the old natural theology was abstract, seeking a divine universal in nature. The new natural theology instead focused on the details of particular religions as a way to discover a hidden, common religious truth; Dawson found the fullest expression of this new interest in the field of comparative religion. If the true spirit of religion could be found in the history of individual religious faiths rather than the book of nature only, then all aspects of faith should be analyzed and compared. The new knowledge "led men to pay attention to the more obscure and non-rational aspects of religion which the theologians of the Enlightenment had despised and neglected."[18] There were no useless superstitions or useless excrescences; all were subject to inspection, cataloguing, and comparison. The inclusion of mystical, extra-rational experience was not exactly new; it too had its intellectual antecedents. In his 1933 collection *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, Dawson asserts that modern rationalism divided into two tracks. On the one path were the scientific materialists, who grounded their rejection of religion in what they considered unassailable scientific principles. The other path was that followed by those Dawson termed the idealists, typified by Rousseau. "[W]hile the Natural Religion of the Deists was the rationalization of an intellectual tradition, that of Rousseau was neither rationalist nor intellectualist: it was a religious faith based on a non-rational intuitive experience which was half mystical and half emotional."[19] The rationalist revolution, in other words, required more than the negative criticism of a Voltaire, for

example, but needed the "romantic humanism" of a Rousseau to effect real social change.

But the putative objectivity of comparative religion was ultimately unworkable. Over the last thirty years, the so-called "postmodernists" have attacked the very idea of objectivity in the human sciences. Every way of explaining the world is a mere "narrative," none more correct than any other. Of course, this is not true; reality exists outside our perception. Nor is postmodernism necessarily correlative with a view of morality that is relativistic or nihilistic; some traditional forms of thought may be quite compatible with postmodernism.[20] Yet the argument that analysis in the human sciences of a set of facts and judgment about them are "objective" and correlate with certain objective conclusions is one that Dawson himself presciently rejected. Of the new comparative religion project, its "programme of philosophic neutrality proved to be impracticable. Both the comparative method and the concept of evolutionary development [of religion] involved judgments of value which had philosophic implications," usually deriving, Dawson found, from Hegel or Auguste Comte.[21] Indeed, without such underlying judgments, comparative religion becomes simply a jumble of unrelated facts.

Thus, both natural theology as initially understood and comparative religion suffered for Dawson from the same flaw despite their different emphases. "Both of them were equally rationalistic and reduced the deepest problems of human consciousness to superficialities. The Natural Theology of the Enlightenment reduced the Living God of Christian tradition to the celestial engineer of the cosmic mechanism, while the science of comparative religion created a museum of dead cults and anthropological curiosities."[22] To remedy this flaw, Dawson invoked the philosopher William James and his study of "religious phenomena in their experiential actuality."[23] Dawson wanted the study of religion to encompass the reality of religious experience that natural theology and comparative religion leave out of their system-building. Traditionally, "the bridge [between reason and religious experience] was built by authority—the collective social guarantee of a supernatural

revelation," a situation that still exists with respect to the world religions. But natural theology and comparative religion, as heirs to the Enlightenment, address only one side of this analysis and ignore the other.

Dawson, therefore, takes a slightly different tack than, say, his contemporary G. K. Chesterton, who in his 1908 book *Orthodoxy* and elsewhere criticized the goals of comparative religion. Chesterton argued that comparative religion was looking only to the externals and assuming then that the substance was the same. This, for Chesterton, was not in fact the case. Different religions "agree in machinery; almost every great religion on earth works with the same external methods, with priests, scriptures, altars, sworn brotherhoods, special feasts. They agree in the mode of teaching; what they differ about is the thing to be taught. Pagan optimists and Eastern pessimists would both have temples, just as Liberals and Tories would both have newspapers. Creeds that exist to destroy each other both have scriptures, just as armies that exist to destroy each other both have guns."[24] Dawson is not unaware that different religions have different teachings, and he is not positing some equivalence among different faiths. Indeed, books such as his *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* were meant to illustrate exactly how particular religious teachings can change culture. However, his goal in these lectures was to contrast religious with nonreligious modes of experience, not to address differences among those experiences. Indeed, his critique of comparative religion echoes Chesterton's main concern: that it is a dead end because the field focuses only on superficialities in the hopes of a false unity.

Having set the stage, Dawson devotes the next set of lectures to trying to recreate the bridge between rationalist proofs of divinity and the lived religious experience based on a wide-ranging assessment of religion and its role in cultural development and how this role cannot be reduced to simple conclusions that religion is a form of "mass delusion" with no objective truth or validity. The archaeological realities of Gobekli Tepe demonstrate that religious experience and communal belief created cultures, not the other

way around.[25] Among other things, what is striking about the middle lectures is the sympathetic and learned understanding of the religious and cultural traditions of other cultures. There is little, if any, extended discussion of Western culture. Instead, Dawson takes his examples mainly from the people of North America and Asia, especially the Indian Vedas and classic Buddhist texts, for which Dawson obviously has great respect. There is little here of Dawson as the caricatured Christian apologist but rather a disciplined social scientist taking seriously what the religious texts and traditions of other cultures say about their experience of the divine. In these chapters, Dawson outlines two central subjects. The first subject is an exploration of the sources of religious knowledge and whether it is different from other kinds of knowledge. The second traces, in a more abbreviated way than in some of his other works, the rise of the "world religions," as he calls them, such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, which superseded the local, polytheistic cults.

Unlike the prior, polytheistic or animist cultures in which new gods or spirits were incorporated into the old gods, sometime under new names, the world religions instead posited a universal religious experience. Old gods needed to yield to the new (although as Dawson notes in the case of India, there are nuances even there), but these world religions share with natural theology the conclusion that "the elements of religious truth are common to the human race and accessible to every rational creature."[26] The world religions, in other words, stand apart from (Dawson uses the word "transcended") individual cultures to create "spiritual unities," each representing a different spiritual principle and each mutually exclusive of the others, until recently, when the last fruits of the Enlightenment—the technical and scientific revolutions beginning in the nineteenth century—threatened to overwhelm them all.

Each of the three religious phenomena he discusses—prophet, priest, and king—is meant to assist in bringing human culture in line with divine reality. The prophet is the figure who calls a people to the divine and has direct experience with the transcendent.

Prophet and priest exist in a symbiotic but not fully stable relationship, as the former represents the radicalism of God while the priesthood provides "the authoritative, regulating principle in religion and the institutional bond between religion and culture."[27] And the king represents the divine on Earth, perhaps most fully realized in the sun worship of ancient Egypt, where the association of Pharaoh with the Sun-God was most complete. Each of these cultural institutions, Dawson implies, provides a way of knowledge not recognized by natural theology or rationalism.

The argument of *Religion and Culture* challenged the secular outlook of the social sciences, which assumed that religious knowledge was used to explain the unexplainable forces of nature, dreams, premonitions, and similar phenomena. The secular outlook held that man has conquered nature—and in light of the diverse religious customs arising out of our primitive heritage—such religious experience can be revealed for what it is, simply a struggle by early humanity to comprehend the inexplicable universe. In contrast, what Dawson calls the "reality and autonomy of religious knowledge," which rests in the "recognition of a superhuman Reality of which man is somehow conscious and towards which he must in some way orientate his life," is precisely the experience that is being contested by secularists of every age.[28]

The secular view may be superficially appealing, for it appears to give humanity control over the natural and supernatural worlds—"for the religion that we find as a historical reality … [is] man-made religion."[29] But it is not the religion of the philosophers because religious experience is mixed not only with reason but also with human hopes and fears. But that does not make it any less real nor deny it a separate category of human experience, because these primitive beginnings captured a truth that human experience is not defined solely by reason, and so the civilizational construct of modern life is "on a relatively superficial level of existence and consciousness." This contention picks up a theme Dawson uses throughout his work, which is that modern society is only one form of human organization, and it must recognize that other forces are at work that it cannot completely control. Some of those are

mechanical or scientific, such as the forces modern society itself unleashed, but others are those that lay at the core of our existence as humans.

Dawson uses the findings of comparative religion to argue that what the great world religions have in common is a feeling and experience of transcendence and that this transcendence is not a cultural or evolutionary byproduct. He recognizes that the "philosopher and the scientist may question the probative force of this experience," but Dawson claims it was the base of the historic religions, indeed as "one of the ultimate and absolute sources of historic religion."[30] Indeed, Dawson spends much of the chapter titled "God and the Supernatural" defending the mystical traditions of various world religions. In his view, the expression of deep human knowledge by which "man attains a consciousness deeper than that of his discursive reason but no less real" has persuasive force because it "appears to be a universal human experience."[31] In contrast, the New Atheists assert that mystical religious knowledge is simply not knowledge at all.

The New Atheists

Controversy over why humanity has always sought the divine has revivified recently, as evidenced by work from the New Atheists such as the late Christopher Hitchens. Their arguments range from the familiar (religion is a mass delusion) to the seemingly sophisticated (genes made us religious), but they are wrestling with the same questions raised by Gobekli Tepe, that is, the relation of the divine and the spiritual in human culture. Taken together, the answers they pose are premised on the same assumptions: God is not "out there," and some technique, such as economics, biology, or particle physics will either explain God or explain Him away.

In some sense, these writers are the heirs of the natural theology debate that Dawson outlines in *Religion and Culture*. The debate pits those who believe religion is a different path of knowledge than the scientific and therefore deserving of study and those who seek to define religious experience as either mistaken or reducible to another form of knowledge. While the eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century thinkers thought to diminish revealed religion in favor of empirical proof of the divine presence by using reason, the New Atheists argue that reason itself shows that there is no basis to believe in a divine presence at all. And insofar as they adopt a comparative approach, they discount the features Dawson identifies as elements of a true religious culture and treat almost all characteristics of the world religions as errors, evil, or accidents. Thus, Sam Harris writes that religion distorts whatever clear ethical lessons it may be trying to teach:

> "[I]t is not enough that Jesus was a man who transformed himself to such a degree that the Sermon on the Mount could be his heart's confession. He also had to be the son of God, born of a virgin, and destined to return to Earth trailing clouds of glory. The effect of such dogma is to place the example of Jesus forever out of reach. His teaching ceases to be a set of empirical claims about the linkage between ethics and spiritual insight and instead becomes a gratuitous, and rather gruesome, fairy tale."[32]

Others, such as Dennett and Dawkins, rely explicitly on advances in natural science, particularly biology, that they say make religion superfluous or even harmful. Like Dawson, Dennett refers to William James but reverses Dawson's approach. Whereas Dawson invoked James as a way of bringing back some experiential perspective to religious experience, Dennett does the opposite, rejecting James in favor of a "wide-ranging biological and social telescope."[33] In a now famous example, Dennett likens religion to a "meme," a packet of cultural-social practices and beliefs that is transmitted between people and propagated presumably so long as it confers some advantage. What that advantage may be, however, is never quite explained, leading some evolutionary theorists, such as the late Stephen Jay Gould, to argue that religion is a side effect of the true evolutionary advantages afforded the large human brain. And as Christopher Beha explains in a lengthy essay on recent New Atheist literature, they have yet to explain why or how

we should live in a way that does not descend into nihilism or parody.[34]

In his book *The Evolution of God*, Robert Wright tries a Marx-like materialist analysis of religious belief that differs little in its overall argument from those Dawson confronted eighty years ago. The argument in the book would have been recognizable in Dawson's day as a form of materialist anthropology. Wright argues that historical religions share such common features that there must be a natural evolutionary process joining all religions together. That process includes certain moral features that obscure individual differences in religious tradition. Wright writes that particular religions are converging on a higher moral sense that transcends every particular religion. Although not unsympathetic to the need for people to express their belief in a moral order as emanating from a transcendent, personal God, for Wright that impulse is ultimately "natural selection's way of steering us toward fruitful relationships."[35] (Coincidentally, this higher understanding largely coincides with the moral sense of a former Christian living in Princeton, like Wright himself.) As one reviewer noted, Wright's argument is basically "creationism for liberals," and it commits the same mistake that Dawson identified in the secularists of his time.[36] The mistake is to understand religious expression solely as the byproduct of other causes and not as an experience in itself. The proponents of secular understandings do not really believe that people really believe what their faith teaches. So to them religion must be an explanation for something else, and any "progress" must be in the secular-liberal direction.

Yet their sole reliance on empirical science is also misplaced, as Dawson noted in his own essays. Scientific analysis is no more necessarily objective than any other, and praise of the scientific method is not equally coterminous with the rational or reasonable. Moreover, science, in the abstract, does not and cannot have a teleological perspective because it "is purely instrumental and concerned with means [and] can never take the place of religion which is essentially concerned with ends."[37] Dawson compares the modern rationalists with Lucretius, who used his materialism not

"in the modern fashion as an instrument of the conquest of nature but as a means of moral purification and a preparation for a good death."[38] Ancient rationalism differs from modern in that the modern variant, joined with technological success unknown to the ancient world, is closely "associated with a faith in social progress and with moral optimism."[39] Thus, for example, for thinkers like Hitchens and Dennett, progress and secularism go hand in hand; to eliminate religion is simply another stage to a secular utopia. However, this "secularization thesis" has lost much of its descriptive force in light of new findings, even as Gobekli Tepe supports Dawson's core contention about the intertwining of religion and societal development.[40]

Religion and Culture closes with a consideration of the effect of the unification of the world cultures under "scientific knowledge and technique." Dawson notes that, by themselves, scientific advances come with no political program or agenda. That makes them all the more dangerous when separated from their founding relationship with Western political and religious culture. "The new scientific culture is devoid of all positive spiritual content" is a statement as true today as it was when Dawson wrote that scientific methods are "no culture at all in the traditional sense—that is to say it is not an order which integrates every side of human life in a living spiritual community."[41] Pope Benedict XVI developed a similar theme in his 2006 Regensburg lecture. He cautioned that the scientific method—which judges the validity of statements only insofar as they conform to mathematical or empirical tests—necessarily exclude religion. But to do so does not liberate human reason; it imprisons it. For then ethical or moral questions must be decided simply:

> on the basis of his experiences, what he considers tenable in matters of religion, and the subjective "conscience" becomes the sole arbiter of what is ethical. In this way, though, ethics and religion lose their power to create a community and become a completely personal matter. This is a dangerous state of affairs for humanity, as we see

> from the disturbing pathologies of religion and reason that necessarily erupt when reason is so reduced that questions of religion and ethics no longer concern it. Attempts to construct an ethic from the rules of evolution or from psychology and sociology, end up being simply inadequate.[42]

The difficulty with the analyses offered by Hitchens, Wright, and the others is that there is no real comparison between a religious culture and a historical nonreligious culture. To Hitchens, religion "poisons" everything and is a "multiplier" of somehow natural or preexisting tribal conflicts. But to Dawson's point, there has been no culture, let alone a higher civilization, that has existed without a religious sentiment that is both overarching and deeply embedded in the culture itself. But, to be clear, there has never been a "religious" culture, in the abstract, that is, a culture that can be separated from the human and material factors of its surroundings. As Dawson so carefully shows here and elsewhere, there are specific religious faiths that interact with particular cultural contexts. It is therefore impossible to say what the history of a particular society would have been absent religious belief. David Bentley Hart has addressed this point, in a critique of Dennett's work, in *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*. Hart writes that the supposedly shocking argument of the New Atheists that religion is "natural" is in fact something painfully obvious, but that does not mean natural phenomena cannot themselves convey divine truth. Moreover, "religion in the abstract does not actually exist.... Rather, there are a very great number of different beliefs and practices … and very few of them depend on some fanciful notion that religion itself is a miraculous exception to the rule of nature."[43] Perhaps the clearest example of societies that tried to do without any specific religious faith at all are either explicitly atheistic societies such as Soviet Russia, which have been disastrous, or the Western scientific culture, which, although perhaps neutral in its methods, is susceptible to being overtaken by equally dangerous ideologies.

Conclusion

The current crop of New Atheists, like perhaps some of the audience for Dawson's lectures, may not believe that a spiritual reality exists over and above the natural one. When Dawson writes that the shaman in primitive cultures is able to "transcend the limits of ordinary knowledge and to attain that deeper level of consciousness which we have described already as the natural basis for religious experience," the disciples of Hitchens and the rest are likely to scoff.[44] Yet the social and hard sciences cannot substitute for religious experience. God is not "in or out" of our ability to discern Him. As Terry Eagleton noted in a review of Dawkins, in traditional Christian theology, God's existence is the baseline for our own; His transcendence and simplicity are features of divinity, not scientific hypotheses that can be proven through empirical methods. We therefore cannot reason our way to understand the Divine Nature, and our analogies must always be incomplete. Thus, Hitchens's assertions that God's omnipotence is like a celestial North Korea simply fails to address how God has typically been understood. Nor is the science of Dawkins, Dennett, and the rest as absolute as they would like it; as authors such as Raymond Tallis have shown, scientific assertions as to whether biology "causes" morality, or eliminates free will, often depend on assertions as unproven as any religious claim, and moreover that such claims ignore humans as "purposive" animals that construct reality as much as obey it.[45]

Dawson's work as a whole, and this book in particular, can make a substantial contribution to current debates. First, Dawson explains how the religious element in society is enduring, no matter the particular physical or environmental factors forming that society. It is a separate experience from, say, the experience of mathematical discovery or appreciation of art. Therefore, human societies will always need a religious outlet. Even some atheists are beginning to recognize that this feature of human life is not disappearing, even in a supposedly enlightened developed world. Alain de Botton, for example, imagines a purely invented religion, with "Agape tables" and bits of scripture as substitutes for the historic

world religions.[46] The modern science of religion did a great service in untangling the patterns of cultural and religious change. However,

> this rational simplification is not enough; we also need the help of a true natural Theology to interpret the supercultural and purely religious elements that are contained in the hieroglyphs of ritual and myth. This was the older tradition of the science of religion … and although it was discredited by the absence of a true method of historical inquiry and a lack of psychological and philological techniques, it was more true in principle than the rationalism of nineteenth century comparative religion, since it did attempt to explain religious phenomena in terms of religion—theologically, not anthropologically.[47]

Second, Dawson stands as an example of a religious believer who recognizes that religion and science are not antithetical but are different parts of a healthy culture. Dawson was hopeful for a new unity between scientific civilization and a spiritual community. His argument in *Religion and Culture* was to place back into conversation an understanding of natural theology that could once more serve as a bridge between the secular and the religious, the scientific and the transcendent. Although Dawson was providing a descriptive account of the development of natural theology, both historically and philosophically, the outlines of what such a revived natural theology might look like are present. This new natural theology would recombine what had been sundered during the wars of religion. It would respect the natural sciences and their power to plumb the mysteries of the natural world, while recognizing that they cannot, alone, explain religious intimations of the transcendent. As a historical matter, this approach would recognize that although the temple-complex of Gobekli Tepe and similar structures may have only historical interest today, for the people who built them such monuments represented a participation in the divine life of the universe.

It was vital for Dawson that the two be rejoined in some way because science without culture was, candidly, dangerous to human life, while culture without scientific inquiry was sterile and, in the modern era, impotent. Dawson cited Ernst Renan on this point. Renan, once known as a famous debunker of Christianity but who later in life feared that the loss of belief in the supernatural would lead to moral decline, contended that science could not supply what was lacking.[48] Physics, as scientist Steve Talbott has noted, cannot explain *meaning*; and biologists are learning more and more deeply that substance—the stuff of reality—is "a bearer of meaning" that cannot be reduced simply to scientific explanation.[49]

Endnotes

1. A different version of this essay has appeared as the introduction to the new edition of *Religion and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2013).
2. Charles C. Mann, "The Birth of Religion," http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2011/06/gobekli-tepe/manntext.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 70.
6. Ibid.
7. Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (London: Twelve Books, 2007); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007) and *Letters to a Christian Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Robert Wright, *The Evolution of God* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009); Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin, 2007); and Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.)
8. Christopher Dawson, *Christianity and the New Age* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931), 40.
9. *Progress and Religion*, xxiii.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 77.
12. Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1948), 3.
13. Ibid., 4.

14. Ibid., 8.
15. Ibid., 9.
16. Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture* (Sheed & Ward, 1933), 149. For Dawson, Voltaire was in whom "modern rationalism first obtained complete self-consciousness."
17. *Religion and Culture*, 16.
18. Ibid., 15.
19. *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, 150–51.
20. See, for example, Gerald J. Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007).
21. *Religion and Culture*, 17.
22. Ibid., 18.
23. Ibid.
24. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, in *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 333–334. See also Chesterton's discussion in his 1925 book *The Everlasting Man*, especially part I, chapter 4, "God and Comparative Religion."
25. Dawson intimated at such discoveries in an essay titled "Religion and the Life of Civilization," in which he stated that it was "even possible that agriculture and the domestication of animals were exclusively religious in their beginnings." See Christopher Dawson, *The Dynamics of World History*, ed. John J. Mulloy (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 113–114.
26. *Religion and Culture*, 211.
27. Ibid., 84.
28. Ibid., 25.
29. Ibid., 28.
30. Ibid., 31–32.
31. Ibid., 35.
32. Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 204.
33. Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (London: Penguin, 2007), 11.
34. Christopher R. Beha, "Reason for Living: the Good Life without God," *Harper's* (July 2012): 73–78.
35. Wright, *The Evolution of God*, 455.
36. Jerry A. Coyne, "Creationism for Liberals," *The New Republic* (Aug. 12, 2009), http://www.tnr.com/article/books/ creationism-liberals.
37. *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, 154.
38. Ibid., 144.
39. Ibid.

40. See, for example, Rebecca R. French, "Lamas, Oracles, Channels, and the Law: Reconsidering Law and Social Theory, *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 10 (1988): 5605–5635; and Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
41. *Religion and Culture*, 215.
42. Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Benedict XVI to München, Altötting and Regensburg (September 2006), http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/papal-address-at-university-of-regensburg.
43. David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Despisers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010): 7–8.
44. *Religion and Culture*, 39.
45. See Raymond Tallis, *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (London: Acumen, 2011).
46. Alain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer's Guide to the Use of Religion* (New York: Vintage, 2013), 48.
47. *Religion and Culture*, 61.
48. Ernest Renan, *Vie de Jésus* (Paris: 1863).
49. Steve Talbott, "What Do Organisms Mean?" *The New Atlantis* (Winter 2011): 24–49.

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Culture and History in Eric Voegelin and Christopher Dawson

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In a time of secular ideology and positivist methodology, both Christopher Dawson and Eric Voegelin sought to recover the central role that religion and religious experience used to play in the historical analysis of Western civilization. As a response to the ideological deformation of their times, both Dawson and Voegelin believed that a restoration of religion as the central feature in historical analysis would not only provide clarity for an understanding of the past but also point toward a path of comprehending the genuine nature of reality for today and the future. The recognition that humans were fundamentally spiritual creatures who lived a historical existence would clear the ideological rubble that either denied the spiritual nature of human beings or abstracted it from any meaningful historical context. In this sense, both Dawson and Voegelin proceeded in the same spirit as scholars who sought to conserve an understanding of the past that was at its core both religious and historical.

Interestingly, neither thinker cited the other's works in either their major publications or personal correspondences. References of Voegelin in Dawson's works and correspondence are nonexistent, while Voegelin referred to Dawson only once. As a Guggenheim Fellow, Voegelin was asked to provide his views about the direction of social science and its relation to tax-exempt foundations to a congressional committee investigating this matter. In his draft, Voegelin analyzed the current state of social sciences—progressivism, instrumentalism, behavioralism, positivism—and criticized them as non-sciences. It is in this context that he evoked Dawson: "When

you jump from a sky-scraper, as Christopher Dawson said, whether you choose the window to the right or the left does not make much of a difference by the time you reach the pavement."[1] It is clear from this quote that Voegelin knew Dawson's works, or at least Dawson's *Understanding Europe*; but this reference was to illustrate the poor state of social science rather than to support Voegelin's own theoretical work on consciousness, history, or religion. Other than this fleeting allusion to Dawson, Voegelin did not cite Dawson again.

This mutual silence and near total non-acknowledgment of each other's works is all the more puzzling because both had a similar understanding about the nature of history, the role of culture, and the problem of modern civilization. Both Dawson and Voegelin understood history as the relationship between humans and God; and both of them conceived of culture, where the events of history transpired, as something that was simultaneously material and spiritual. The human encounter with God was realized and articulated in cultural ideals and institutions that subsequently would shape civilization. But once civilization abandoned this religious dimension of its existence, it became deformed ideologically, whether categorized as "neo-pagan" as Dawson did or "Gnostic" to use Voegelin's vocabulary. Even though Dawson wrote as a historian and Voegelin as a political scientist, both thinkers were essentially in agreement in their understanding of history, culture, and the crisis of modern civilization.

Despite these similarities, there has been no significant secondary literature comparing the thought of Dawson and Voegelin.[2] This article will remedy this deficiency by exploring these thinkers' shared understanding of these themes of history, culture, and religion. I will first start with an account of Voegelin's methodology of consciousness and then examine his theories of history, culture, and religion. What we will discover is that Voegelin lacked a definitive concept of culture in his political science that made him more of a theologian rather than a political scientist, a claim that he had always argued to the contrary. This want of culture in his philosophy in turn led Voegelin to construct a vision

of Christianity that was at odds with the more traditional understanding that we find in Dawson. For Dawson, culture was at the heart of his historical methodology and informed his account of civilization and religion. In a strange way, because of his concept of culture, Dawson, as a historian, was able to explain changes in civilization better than Voegelin, a political scientist.

A Theory of Consciousness

Trained in political science, Eric Voegelin considered himself first and foremost a political scientist, with the title of his most famous work, *The New Science of Politics*, as a declaration of his disciplinary allegiance.[3] But his conception of political science was radically different from the philosophy of positivism that had dominated the discipline during his life. Confronted with the ideologies of communism and fascism, Voegelin rejected a theory of politics that was informed by positivism because such a theory could not adequately explain these political phenomena. What was required was a theory of consciousness to be at the center of a theory of politics in order to understand and to evaluate these ideologies.[4] Voegelin therefore sought to remedy this deficiency in the discipline by developing his own theory of consciousness that would become the foundation for his theory of politics.

According to Voegelin, consciousness was neither a given in reality nor constructed a priori; rather, it was a fluid movement that continues to articulate and re-articulate itself in the reality in which it had participated. In other words, Voegelin conceived of consciousness and reality as a type of process. Through rigorous introspection, the political scientist discovered a "center of energy" that was engaged in this process and concluded that this process could be observed only from the vantage point of within.[5] There did not exist a Cartesian perspective outside of the political scientist to understand reality: he could only understand reality as a participant within it.[6]

Within his own consciousness, the political scientist experienced the illumination of the spiritual dimensions of his consciousness in his relationship with the divine. However, this experience

of the divine for Voegelin was in the form of a process that structured time itself: the divine was understood by the political scientist as a type of process that created a past, present, and future within the interior space of his own consciousness.[7] This understanding of the divine as a type of process that formed a past, present, and future in consciousness was perfectly acceptable to Voegelin "because it makes the divine intelligible as an analogue to man's consciousness."[8] The political scientist could understand the divine only if the divine acted as a process that resembled the political scientist's own consciousness. Voegelin justified this assumption by pointing out that the political scientist has only his consciousness to resort to as a model to understand realities that transcended him.[9] He has nowhere else to turn to other than his own consciousness to model reality.

The ontological and epistemological premises of this account of consciousness were that consciousness can only discover being if that being was part of its own nature. Simply put, like can only know like if they were made of the same stuff. By sharing ontologically in the same aspects of vegetation, animals, and the divine, the individual therefore can know the vegetative, animalic, and divine processes that transcended his own consciousness.[10] Although these levels of beings were distinguishable with respect to their own structures, they all were to share some common basis in order for the political scientist's consciousness to recognize them. And since all levels of being participated in a common being, the political scientist can recognize levels of beings that are distinct from him, e.g., vegetative, animalic, divine.

History, therefore, with its dimensions of past, present, and future, did not unfold in sequential events in the external world but rather was a series of phases of divine illumination within the political scientist's consciousness. By using his own consciousness as a model to understand processes that transcended his consciousness, the political scientist was able to reach some knowledge about the divine and his relationship to it. However, he was to be sensitive that his "personal idiosyncrasy" did not interfere with his investigation.[11] To avoid misconstruing the nature of the divine and his

relationship to it, the political scientist was to root his divine-human encounter in a concrete social and historical existence.[12] And to understand this concrete social and historical existence in turn required a philosophy of history so that the model of consciousness could be a "science" as opposed to "personal idiosyncrasy."

The Metaxy

It is for this reason that Voegelin's science of politics was not only a theory of consciousness but also a philosophy of history: "the existence of man in political society is historical existence; and a theory of politics, if it penetrates to principles, must at the same time be a theory of history."[13] The need for a philosophy of history was required because, although humans encountered the divine in their consciousness, these experiences were conditioned and articulated by a social and historical existence; and the articulation of these experiences ordered society concretely and historically. Thus, the symbolization of the divine-human encounter was conditioned by a social and historical existence that provided societal order.

This search for order started with the symbolization of the individual's experience with the divine. Because these symbols were conditioned by a specific social and historical existence, they appeared differently from each other, although they could contain the same type of experience with the divine. Consequently, the role of the political scientist was to penetrate past these symbols to the level of experience in order to locate those experiences that are equivalent to one another despite their different symbolizations.[14] The political scientist was to be open to the experiences of various symbolizations because they may be equivalent to one another in the divine-human encounter.

This openness to the reality of equivalent experiences was to exist in a state of tension between truth and untruth that Voegelin called the *metaxy*. Human existence in the metaxy was an ongoing struggle to know realities, such as the divine, that were beyond the scope of comprehensive human understanding. The political scientist therefore was to be careful not to let his desire to know

dominate his exploration of reality: he was to avoid the desires of *libido dominandi*. The speculation of the political scientist was not to degenerate into an intentionalist desire to know the mystery of the divine as if it were some object; nor was he to assume that human realities belonged to the sphere of the divine.[15] The political scientist was to strike a balance of consciousness between intentionality and acceptance of the mystery in his analysis of reality.

This balance of consciousness, or existence in the metaxy, was described by Voegelin as (1) the individual participated in a process of reality and was conscious of it; (2) the individual also recognized that the search of order transpired within reality where insights became luminous to him and limited to his perspective; (3) the individual expressed this participation in symbols; (4) the individual recognized the symbols he had created were part of the reality in which he found himself; and (5) the symbols the individual created were not the possession of truth but the articulation of the reality, which was a process.[16]

One of the greatest fallacies that political scientists have committed was to mistake the experience for the symbol itself. History was a continuous process for Voegelin, where the experience of the metaxy was constantly being re-articulated as social and historical existence changed. The only constant that truly existed was the experience of the metaxy itself and not its symbolization.[17] Once the existence between the poles of truth and untruth were hypostatized, then the experience was lost in the analysis of reality. As a result, the political scientist's task of recovering experiences of order started at the level of their symbolizations but did not stop until he had discovered experiences that were equivalent to his own divine-human encounter in the metaxy.

The New Political Science

The study of history was to start with the symbolizations of experiences in their social and historical context in order to penetrate the experiences themselves to see whether they corresponded to the political scientist's. But the political scientist's experiences were not the only ones to evaluate; the political scientist was to

create a data set of experiences that he could use in his evaluation because

> [t]heory is not just any opining about human existence in society; it rather is an attempt at formulating the meaning of existence by explicating the content of a definite class of experiences. Its argument is not arbitrary but derives its validity from the aggregate of experiences to which it must permanently refer for empirical control.[18]

The political scientist searched for symbols that were "amendable to theorization as an intelligible succession of phases in a historical process" so that "the order of history emerges from the history of order."[19] This datum of human experiences consisted of "God and man, world and society [that] form a primordial community of being" that the political scientist was to imaginatively reconstruct in his own consciousness.[20] By using his own consciousness as a model, the political scientist could uncover these experiences "by virtue of [his] participation in the mystery of being."[21]

The results of this study were the discovery and classification of these experiences as cosmological, anthropological, soteriological, and Gnostic. Cosmological experience was the "rhythmical repetition of cosmogony in the imperially organized humanity which existed at the center of the cosmos"; anthropological experience was the experience of human participation with the divine; and soteriological experience reflected this same participation but permitted the possibility of friendship between God and humans due to Christ's Incarnation:

> The experience of mutuality in the relation with God, of the *amicitia* in the Thomistic sense, of the grace which imposes a supernatural form on the nature of man, is the specific difference of Christian truth. The revelation of this grace in history, through the incarnation of the *Logos* in Christ, intelligibly fulfilled the adventitious movement of the spirit in the mystic philosophers. The critical authority

> over the older truth of society which the soul had gained through its opening and its orientation toward the unseen measure was now confirmed through the revelation of the measure itself.[22]

Because anthropological and soteriological experiences had endowed humans with insight that right order radiated from their divine-human encounter, cosmological experience, with nature as its model, lost its effectiveness as an experience and symbol of order. Humans were able to be rational contemplators and masters of nature. But this new insight came at a price: instead of attributing nature as the cause of disorder, humans had to look within themselves for the root of their own troubles, i.e., their spiritual fall from grace.

Anthropological and specifically soteriological experiences presented new dangers. Whereas cosmological experience was governed by the rhythm of nature's growth and decay, soteriological experience was to be actualized in the supernatural destiny of humankind by breaking this cosmological rhythm of existence in its search for a perfection beyond temporal reality: "man and mankind now have fulfillment but it lies beyond nature."[23] Borrowing from Augustine, Voegelin believed that external history lacked any finality of meaning since it extended forever into the future, but individuals who experienced derailment from soteriological experience may seek a meaning within external history: to realize a supernatural destiny in temporality.[24] By adopting the Christian structures of grace and salvation, these derailed individuals engaged in a Gnostic project that attempted to realize their eschatological goals in temporal history through human action.

Voegelin discovered this Gnostic experience in Isaiah, who had invoked God to stave off military defeat.[25] The experience resurfaced in the early Christian Church whose members anticipated the imminent *Parousia* as prophesized by the Revelation of John in the New Testament. However, Augustine managed to suppress these chiliastic expectations in his *City of God* by arguing that the *Parousia* would not occur until "a thousand years" had passed, a

safe enough time to end any imminent expectation of it.[26] After the Church Fathers had defeated the Gnostics, Western Christendom continued to follow the Augustinian conception of history until Joachim of Flora, who during the High Middle Ages was terrified by the insecurity of faith because it did not guarantee redemption to anyone.[27]

As a response to this existential insecurity, Joachim created a new faith that drew upon Gnostic sources and conceived of history in three stages—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—with each phase possessing a unique ontological quality. Joachim predicted that a great leader would soon initiate a transition from the second, imperfect stage to the third, perfect one in his lifetime. Although this did not transpire, the lasting significance of Joachim was the transmission of his Gnostic symbols to modern civilization, where the secular culture adopted the symbols of the prophet, the activist leader, and the tripartite structure of history to transform the fundamental nature of reality. These symbols and experiences had become secularized into the philosophies of Turgot, Condorcet, Comte, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx and into the ideologies of fascism, communism, and nationalism.[28]

The Crisis of Modern Civilization

According to Voegelin, the crisis of modern civilization was fundamentally Gnostic in nature. Voegelin classified two experiences as Gnostic: the expectation of the Parousia that would transform the world into a "Kingdom of God" and the elimination of the divine in order to make humans the measure of all things.[29] The first form of Gnosticism was found in the Gospel of John, the Epistles of Paul, ancient Gnostic writings, medieval heresies, and militant Puritanism; the second form was located in the secularized philosophies and ideologies of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment periods. The first type recognized the divine and its transcendent order, whereas the second type rejected it. But what was common to both experiences was the desire of the individual to dominate and transform the world into his own image: his libido dominandi.

The crisis of modern civilization therefore was a rejection of the divine both in individual experience and in the symbolization of that experience. To return to the experience of the divine, to the existential state of the metaxy, the individual had to be open to it and approach it as a participant within reality rather than an observer who can objectively survey the reality as if it were some object. Once symbolized, this experience was to order society. But Voegelin was silent about this process: how were individual experiences that had become symbolized to establish societal order? How did people who did not initially have the same divine-human experience accept such symbolization? And what about people who did not have the divine-human experience at all?[30]

One possible answer where people who did not have such an experience could accept a symbolization of the experience of the divine-human encounter was Christian doctrine and dogma. However, Voegelin's attitude toward doctrine and dogma was ambiguous at best. His works were filled with criticism about the deformation of symbols into doctrinal statements of propositions. Voegelin critiqued "the genesis of 'religion' … defined as the transformation of existence in historical form into the secondary possession of a 'creed' concerning the relation between God and man" as a loss of the individual experience with the divine.[31] While he acknowledged the necessity of dogma as an institutional structure to transmit the insights of divine-human experiences, he was critical of its effectiveness:

> The prophets, philosophers, and saints, who can translate the order of the spirit into the practice of conduct without institutional support and pressure, are rare. For its survival in the world, therefore, the order of the spirit has to rely on a fanatical belief in the symbols of a creed more often than on the *fides caritate formata*—though such reliance if it becomes socially predominant, is apt to kill the order it is supposed to preserve.[32]

Voegelin's critique of dogma was to protect the divine-human experience from symbolic deformation: "There can be no question

of 'accepting' or 'rejecting' a theological doctrine. A vision is not a dogma but an event in metaleptic reality which the philosopher can do no more than try to understand to the best of his ability."[33] In this experience, the individual could legitimately communicate it through the symbol of myth and not proposition: "Divine reality beyond the Metaxy, if it is to be symbolized at all, can be symbolized only by the myth. The truth of myth then is to be measured by the truth of noetically illuminated existence."[34] For Voegelin, the measure of truth was the experience of truth in the metaxy; and myth was the proper conveyance of this truth. The propositions of doctrine and dogma were harmful to it.

The fullest development of Voegelin's thinking on dogma can be found in his essay "Gospel and Culture," in which he stated:

> For the gospel as a doctrine which you can take and be saved, or leave and be condemned, is a dead letter; it will encounter indifference, if not contempt, among inquiring minds outside the church, as well as the restlessness of believers inside who is un-Christian enough to be man the questioner.[35]

Voegelin's rejection of doctrine and dogma was clear: it was unnecessary, anti-philosophical, and ultimately harmful in the search for order. Clearly Voegelin had a conception of Christianity that was at odds with a more traditional understanding.[36]

But more importantly, by elevating the divine-human experience in the metaxy as the criterion for truth, Voegelin was not able to account for how social and political change happened in historical existence. Certain experiences that became symbolized may elicit change among people and thereby become the new ordering principle for society. However, Voegelin was silent on how this process actually transpired: did only elites have to experience this for society to become reordered? Were people, or a certain percentage of people, required to experience the divine-human encounter in the metaxy for the reordering of society? And, again, what about those who did not experience it at all?

Although Voegelin may be correct in his account of consciousness as the nexus of the divine-human encounter, he lacked the conceptual apparatus to account for how this experience would spill over into society as a reordering principle.[37] His adamant rejection of doctrine and dogma precluded any concept for him to explain social and historical change. The irony is that as a political scientist, Voegelin's theories of consciousness, history, and politics cannot explain the basic political process of social change. In a sense, Voegelin was more a religious philosopher than a political scientist, contrary to what he had said otherwise.

If Voegelin had had a conception of culture that would alleviate the concerns he had about doctrine and dogma, then he would be able to account for how a society reordered itself in historical existence. Dawson's understanding of culture may be helpful in this regard. If Dawson's concept of culture can explain social and historical change while still adhering to the philosophical insights of Voegelin, Dawson might be able to explain processes that Voegelin's science of politics did not.

A Concept of Culture

Whereas Voegelin's historical methodology was rooted in a theory of consciousness, Dawson's approach was to write a history of culture modeled after Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. For Dawson, Gibbon's history was a model of historical writing because it not only captured the spirit of the period that he was interpreting but also left a lasting record of the author's eighteenth-century culture. History therefore served a dual purpose in the recreation of the culture that the historian was studying as well as recording the historian's own culture. In this sense, Dawson's sensitivity to the act of historical writing was similar to Voegelin's acknowledgment that the political scientist used his own consciousness as a model to understand processes that transcended it. Both scholars were epistemologically aware that any study of the past was also a study of its own time period.

What Dawson admired in Gibbon's work was how Gibbon was able to recreate the period as "an ordered and intelligible whole."[38]

This presentation was due to Gibbon's "extraordinary literary gift" as well as his close identification with the subject:

> I believe that he has identified with his subject as no other historian has done … possessed and obsessed by the majestic spirit of Rome. His conversion to the Church may have been transitory and superficial, but his conversion to the City and Empire was profound, and governed his whole life and work. He felt as a Roman; he thought as a Roman; he wrote as a Roman.[39]

Furthermore, Gibbon left a valuable record of his own age that subsequent historians could use to understand the eighteenth century: "We cannot fully understand an age unless we understand how that age regarded the past, for every age makes its own past, and this re-creation of the past is one of the elements that go to the making of the future."[40] Gibbon's work therefore was not only an invaluable account of the Roman Empire but also invaluable as "a translation of the past into the language of eighteenth-century culture."[41]

However, Gibbon's work was defective in Dawson's view because of the role that Gibbon attributed to Christianity as a contributing factor to the decline of the Roman Empire, not to mention Gibbon's own general skepticism toward religion.[42] Dawson interpreted Gibbon's account of Christianity as a reflection of educated eighteenth-century attitudes toward religion rather than Christianity's role, or lack thereof, in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire:

> His thought had been so moulded by the culture of the Enlightenment that he could recognise no other values … everything which was of value in the world came from antiquity or the modern classical culture that was rooted in antiquity…. This complete lack of sympathy and understanding for the religious forces which have exerted such an immense influence on Western culture is Gibbon's great

> defect as a historian: and it is a very serious one, since it invalidates his judgment on the very issues which are most vital to his subject.[43]

Although Gibbon was able to portray the culture of the Roman Empire correctly, his own prejudice against religion blinded him from the positive contributions that religion had played in the formation of culture. Like Gibbon, Dawson wanted culture to be at the center of his historical studies but without being prejudicial to religion. On this matter, Gibbon was in error, and Dawson wanted to avoid this same mistake. Accordingly, Dawson defined culture as

> a conscious adaptation of social life to man's external environment and to the order of nature. What the animal does instinctively, man does with conscious purpose and with a greater or less degree of rational calculation. Thus, culture is rooted in nature, just as the higher achievements of the individual mind are rooted in culture.[44]

Culture for Dawson was simultaneously both material and spiritual in nature. Although the articulation of culture was conditioned by the material, social, and historical context of the individual, the origins of this articulation was the individual's intellect and spirit.

Dawson understood culture as "a way of life" that involved "a certain degree of social specialization and the canalization of social energies along certain lines."[45] Even in primitive cultures, there existed "an intensive effort of social discipline directed toward the incorporation of the individual into the community and its social order."[46] What made and sustained a culture was a shared understanding among its people: "a common way of life involves a common view of life, common standards of value … a culture is a spiritual community which owes its unity to common beliefs and common ways of thought."[47] A society without culture is merely formless, "a crowd or collection of individuals brought together by

the needs of the moment."[48] Without a shared understanding of values, beliefs, and thoughts, culture cannot exist.

Although culture possessed a spiritual aspect in its values, beliefs, and thoughts, it also contained material and non-rational elements, for a "change of a culture is not simply a change of thought, it is above all a change of life," which included these elements.[49] But whereas material elements of a culture may be destroyed, the spiritual aspects not only can transcend "the limits of racial and geographical conditions" from which they were derived but also live in other cultures: "Religion and science do not die with the culture of which they formed a part. They are handed on from people to people, and assist as a creative force in the formation of a new cultural organism."[50] But the continuance of these spiritual elements required "a continuous moral effort."[51] Without such effort, culture would collapse and its values would be forever lost.

Change in Culture

Thus far Dawson's understanding of culture comported with Voegelin's "new" science of politics. Both conceived of humans who possessed a spiritual dimension that was articulated and conditioned by a specific social and historical existence. But Dawson's emphasis on the materiality of culture provided insights into historical existence that Voegelin's science lacked. Specifically, the material aspect of Dawson's culture can better account for the interaction between the individual's spiritual values and his material existence as well as changes that transpired in his culture.

With Voegelin's science of politics, historical change was primarily due to a rupture in the metaxy caused by the individual's *libido dominandi*. The interaction between the individual's spiritual values and his material existence was essentially unidirectional from the individual's divine-human encounter. Although Dawson agreed that the divine-human encounter was primary, he did not downplay the role of material existence in the formation of culture. The result was that Dawson's concept of culture made his historical methodology more pluralistic and open to other factors to account

for cultural change. Because of this, Dawson was able to explain cultural interaction and change better than Voegelin.

According to Dawson, the spiritual values that animate culture developed in interaction with other factors and were also, in turn, influenced by them:

> A culture is a common way of life—a particular adjustment of man to his natural surroundings and his economic needs. … Not that man is merely plastic under the influence of his material environment. He moulds it, as well as being moulded by it.[52]

Furthermore, neither material nor spiritual elements of culture were static entities for Dawson but continually evolving:

> [A] culture is essentially a growth, and it is a whole. It cannot be constructed artificially.… Hence every culture develops its own types of man and norms of existence and conduct, and we can trace the curve of the growth and decline of cultural life by the vitality of these characteristic types and institutions as well as by the art and literature in which the soul of the culture finds expression.[53]

To trace the contours of a culture, the historian looked first to "Religion, then Society, then Art, and finally Philosophy. Not that one of these is cause and the other effects. They are all different aspects of functions of one life."[54]

In this account, Dawson provided specific material features of cultures that were articulations of spiritual values—religion, society, art, and philosophy—and were to be studied in a holistic fashion. Whereas in Voegelin's science of politics the divine-human encounter usually manifested itself in religion or philosophy as the primary unit of analysis, Dawson called for a study including additional factors like society and art.[55] Dawson furthermore did not give methodological weight to religion or philosophy—"Not that

one of these is cause and the other effects. They are all different aspects of functions of one life."—as we find in Voegelin with his emphasis on religion or philosophy. Dawson's holistic approach to historical existence therefore not only included factors that were downplayed or secondary in Voegein's methodology but also acknowledged how material factors influenced spiritual ones.

Because of his methodological openness, Dawson could account for cultural change in historical existence that went beyond Voegelin's explanation of the *libido dominandi*. According to Dawson, a culture

> represent[s] a fusion of a number of elements, and the history of world civilizations is a complex process of diffusion and cross-fertilization and hybridization like the blending of different racial elements in the growth of a nation. … The most common form of cultural change is that which results from the conquest of one's people by another, so that it also involves biological and racial change."[56]

Although cultural change was an extremely complex process, culture generally speaking changed "not from within, but from the foreign pressure of some external culture."[57]

The adoption of "some elements of material culture developed by another people" can bring cultural change of great importance and show "the close interdependence of cultures." For example, "[w]e see how in the past the use of metals, agriculture and irrigation, a new weapon or the use of the horse in war, have spread from one end of the Old World to the other with amazing rapidity."[58] Such "innovations may alter the whole system of social organization," but more likely than not "external change of this kind … leads not to social progress but to social decay."[59] Cultural progress was the "exceptional condition, due to a number of distinct causes, which often operate irregularly and spasmodically."[60] "As a rule," Dawson judged, "to be progressive, change must come from within, as culture is a living, organic whole."[61]

However, new material elements were not the only factors that could affect culture. Spiritual values, as conveyed by religious movements, could have a more dramatic impact on culture, bringing "revolutionary changes that are by no means rare in history."[62] Islam was such an instance, where a new religious movement transformed a culture:

> Here we see in full clearness and detail how a new religion may create a new culture. A simple individual living [in] a cultural backwater originates a movement [that] in a comparatively short time sweeps across the world, destroying the historic empires and civilizations, and creating a new way of life which still moulds the thought and behavior of millions from Senegal to Boreno."[63]

Another example was the Renaissance and the Reformation, where the respective ideas of "the apotheosis of Humanity" and "the supreme example of the anti-humanist spirit, the enemy of moderation and human reason" supplanted the medieval Catholic world with its balance between the material and spiritual elements.[64] The result of these two movements was the secularization of culture so that nationalism and the Enlightenment "shut its eyes to everything but the natural virtues of the human heart, and salved the wounds of humanity with a few moral platitudes."[65]

Dawson's explanation of cultural change therefore was not limited to material factors; spiritual elements could also play a role. By studying culture and cultural change in a holistic fashion, Dawson was able to account for changes in culture that were more dynamic and open to other factors than what we find in Voegelin. But despite these differences, both Dawson and Voegelin believed that religion or religious experience was at the core of cultural formation and the standard from which to measure cultural growth or decay. The recovery of religion to study culture consequently was important to both thinkers not only to understand the past but also to comprehend the present age that was characterized by ideological deformation.

The Role of Religion

Like Voegelin, Dawson rejected the methodologies that sought to understand cultures while denying their religious character:

> The apostles of the eighteenth century Enlightenment were above all intent on deducing the laws of social life and progress from a small number of simple rational principles. They cut through the luxuriant deep-rooted growth of traditional belief with the ruthless of pioneers in a tropical jungle … they traced religious origins no further than the duplicity of the first knave and the simplicity of the first fool.[66]

The heirs of the Enlightenment, the positivists, were "haunted by the dream of explaining social phenomena by the mathematical and quantitative methods of the physical sciences, and thus creating a science of society which [would] be completely mechanistic and determinist."[67] However, this purportedly objective approach often "carried them beyond the limits of sociology proper into the deep water of ethics and metaphysics" and prompted them into "the practical work of civic reform."[68] Instead of studying societies in order to understand them, the positivist wanted to study societies to reform them—and usually in their own image.

Rebuffing the positivist's denial of religion, Dawson instead adopted an Augustinian approach to historical existence. Dawson often evoked Augustine's distinction between the cities of man and of God, where these "two cities are interwoven and intermixed in this era, and await separation at the last judgment."[69] For Dawson, these two cities did not meet spiritually but did intermingle physically:

> We must remember that behind the natural process of social conflict and tension which runs through history there is a deeper law of spiritual duality and polarization which is expressed in the teaching of the Gospel on the opposition of the World and the Kingdom of God and in St. Augustine's doctrine of the two cities Babylon and Jerusalem

> whose conflict run through all history and give its ultimate significance.[70]

The object of the individual's love was what separated membership into these two cities; the city of man "looks for glory from men" and the city of God "finds its highest glory in God."[71] Dawson likewise adopted this position: "There is no aspect of human life and no sphere of human action which is neutral or 'secular' in the absolute sense."[72] Everything was subject to this dualism, even material forces whether they remained secular or spiritualized.

Augustine was "the founder of the philosophy of history" for Dawson because Augustine had discovered that history itself has spiritual meaning.[73] Unlike the Greeks who had a cosmological perspective, Christians believed that the purpose of history was part of God's plan; or, to use Voegelin's vocabulary, Christians introduced soteriological experience to supplant the cosmological one. As a philosophy of history, Dawson used Augustine's theory of history because it was concerned about the nature of history, the meaning of history, and the cause of significant historical change that involved the whole of humanity with its temporal and eternal destinies. However, these destinies did not transpire in temporality for Dawson: "the existing order of things had no finality for the Christian."[74] Like Voegelin and Augustine, Dawson rejected a definitive endpoint in temporality, thereby discrediting the legitimacy of certain ideological or Gnostic projects that claim insight into the fundamental structures of reality.

In addition to Augustine's account of history, Dawson also accepted aspects of Thomism in his works.[75] According to Dawson, Thomas's affirmation of the Incarnation's sanctification of the concrete and material was his fundamental principle and therefore made it permissible for someone like Dawson to study the material elements of culture.[76] This sanctification of the concrete and material allowed Thomas to balance the material and spiritual elements in Christian culture: "the whole Thomist synthesis" was governed by "the concordance in the difference of these two orders—of Nature and Grace, of Reason and Faith, of the temporal and

spiritual powers."[77] This equilibrium was the essential significance of Scholasticism for Dawson. In Thomism Dawson saw the potential of a "really catholic philosophy of history" whose "dominant spirit" would be a spiritual unity among different national states.[78]

Influenced by both Augustine and Aquinas, Dawson claimed that "religion is the key to history" and that "we cannot understand the inner form of a society unless we understand its religion."[79] As an organized way of life that was based on a common tradition and environment, culture's defining feature was its worship of the same divinity that included doctrines and dogma. The loss of religious faith necessitated the eventual destruction of a culture. In other words, there was no possibility of a secular culture for Dawson because culture, by his definition, was rooted in religion itself.[80] Religion therefore was

> based on the recognition of a superhuman Reality of which man is somehow conscious and towards which he must in some way orientate his life. The existence of the tremendous transcendent reality that we name GOD is the foundation of all religion in all ages and among all people.[81]

Religion served as a bridge between the spiritual and material elements in culture; and such a study of religion would not only include the experiences of individuals but also their rituals, doctrines, dogmas, and institutions. Religion consequently was both material and spiritual in nature, and the historian's task was to study every aspect of it.

Catholic Culture

Dawson believed that Christianity, and specifically Catholicism, was the standard by which to evaluate culture. In his analysis of culture, he employed a concept that he called metahistory:

> [T]he Christian view of history is not a secondary element derived by philosophical reflection from the study of history. It lies at the very heart of Christianity and forms an

> integral part of the Christian faith. Hence there is no Christian "philosophy of history" in the strict sense of the word. There is, instead, a Christian history and a Christian theology of history, and it is not too much to say that without them there would be no such thing as Christianity.[82]

The connection between Christianity and history led Dawson to accept the orthodox Christian truths to understand history and culture. Of particular importance was the Incarnation in Christianity that made religion a "culturally creative force" because it affirmed the material elements in culture.[83] Catholicism embraced this sanctification of the temporal and material, whereas Protestantism did not because it was "ferociously iconoclastic as the early Moselems" and therefore "the antithesis of Humanism."[84] In fact the Protestantism of his time, as in Barth, "went further than Calvin himself in their denial of human values."[85] This hostility to the sanctification of the material in turn "contributed so largely to the progressive secularization of Western culture."[86]

By contrast, Catholicism always had a tendency to "incarnate itself in culture," as it sought to order the whole of life toward a unity "not by the denial and destruction of natural human values, but by bringing them into living relation with spiritual truth and spiritual reality."[87] Catholic respect for the material world did not translate into a conformity, rejection, or mastery of it; rather, Catholicism desired to sanctify it spiritually. By making material reality in its proper relation with spiritual reality, Catholicism became for Dawson the measure by which to evaluate other religions and cultures.

According to Dawson, the archetypal pattern of Catholic culture was represented in the medieval period between the fall of the Roman Empire and High Middle Ages of the twelfth century.[88] This Catholic culture consisted of three components: the Augustinian understanding of the relationship between the cities of God and man; the pre-political reform movements of the monasteries that provided the material and temporal dynamism of European culture; and a spiritual unity of Europe that was centered

on the universal Church. The Church itself was the creative force behind medieval culture by not being completely identified or absorbed in either the ideals of Hellenistic humanism or the eschatological prophecies of Israel. It was this tension between Church and culture, and between the spiritual and the material, that made Western Europe a dynamic order, as opposed to the static arrangements in Byzantium.[89] The Augustinian perspective prevented culture from being associated solely with the spiritual or material but rather as a "field of continual effort and conflict."[90] Once culture—and history—was viewed as something less than ultimate, Christianity could work within it without betraying its ideals.

The demystification of the material world allowed Christians to adopt a missionary attitude toward culture. Without materiality, spiritual values cannot transform themselves into actual practice:

> It is only in Western Europe that the whole pattern of culture is to be found in a continuous succession and alternation of free spiritual movements; so that every century of Western history shows a change in the balance of cultural elements, and the appearance of some new spiritual force which creates new ideas and institutions, and produces a further movement of cultural change.[91]

The burden of spiritual reform was placed on religious institutions, such as monasteries, to address social and political ills because they were nonpolitical actors. Dawson warned that religion could only be creative in its cultural tasks if it renewed and protected its own spiritual integrity first. If religion were to be completely absorbed by culture and politics, it would lose its vitality. The "principles of an autonomous Christian order" have "again and again proved to be the seed of a new life" for moral reform.[92]

Finally, the medieval Church was able to unify Europe not on the basis of power politics but as a spiritual ideal because it was able to maintain its independence from culture and politics: "For here the church did not become incorporated in a social and political order that it was powerless to modify; it found itself abandoned to its own

resources in a world of chaos and destruction."[93] Under the unity and leadership of the Church, various ethnicities and nationalities were permitted to maintain their identities and still be part of the same community because of the transnational character of Christianity. By contrast, modern attempts to unify Europe on ideology have proven to be disastrous.[94] Although religion has been banished from modern, secular culture, the religious impulse still exists, manifesting itself as an "anti-social force of explosive violence."[95] Denied its natural satisfaction in religion, culture "substitute[d] religions" of class, race, and other ideologies for religion's place.[96] The crisis of modern civilization therefore was a cultural one with the replacement of religion by ideological deformation.

Conclusion

This conceptual confusion about culture—to deny its religious and spiritual character and accept only its material aspects—was predominant during Dawson's time, as the term served "as a convenient omnibus expression to cover all the subordinate non-economic social activities which have to be included in the organisation of a planned society."[97] This understanding of culture was often paired with political ideology that created "historical myths as a psychological basis for social unity."[98] With these ideas, historians looked to the national state as the fundamental unit of analysis in their studies that, as a result, affected historical inquiry: "Since the unit is a political one, the method of interpretation has tended to be political also, so that history has often sunk to the level of political propaganda."[99] Dawson envisioned himself as returning his discipline back to objective inquiry rather than political commitment by recovering an understanding of culture that was both material and spiritual in nature.[100]

For Dawson, the historical dependence upon a philosophical system of ideas was fundamentally different from a dependence upon a cultural paradigm. Thus, Dawson rejected a purely philosophical approach to a revitalization of Western civilization because such a method was too abstract and too absolute given the diversity of humankind's religious and cultural experiences.[101] Without

taking into consideration the historical conditions under which its ideas were conceived, philosophy was impotent in its tasks. Extracting ideas from their historical context was unacceptable to Dawson. Culture, properly understood, could illuminate historical existence while philosophical systems could not.

As a political scientist, Voegelin also shared Dawson's concern about studying ideas abstracted from their historical context. On this point, as well as many others, Voegelin and Dawson were in agreement.[102] But where they diverged was in their conceptions of culture. Voegelin did not provide a clear conception of culture, with the result being that individual experience became the primary factor to explain the growth and decay of society. By contrast, Dawson's account of culture, particularly with its focus on its materiality and his openness to all aspects of it, allowed him to explain the internal dynamics of societal cohesion as well as external processes of growth and decay.

Although both believed religion or religious experience was central to the recovery of Western civilization, they differed in their answers. For Voegelin, the recovery started and ended with the individual; for Dawson, the process began with and concluded in culture. Of course, both are required to understand historical existence as well as to revitalize modern Western civilization. But the absence of a conception of culture in Voegelin's methodology made his claims about being a political scientist a difficult one, as he could not account for societal cohesion and change other than by reverting to individual experience. However, Dawson, the historian, could accomplish these tasks with his conception of culture. In this sense, Dawson appeared to be more the political scientist than Voegelin.

Endnotes

1. Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (hereafter *CW*) (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990–2009), Vol. 30, *Selected Correspondence 1950–1984*, ed. Thomas A. Hollweck (2007), 197. The actual quote from Dawson was in reference to the unlikelihood that modern Western civilization would survive after it had abandoned Christianity for neo-paganism: "neo-paganism jumps out of the top-story

window, and whether on the right-hand window or the left makes very little difference by the time one reaches the pavement." Christopher Dawson, *Understanding Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1952), 16. For more about Eric Voegelin's own life, refer to *CW 34*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (2006), and *Voegelin Recollected: Conversations on a Life*, eds. Barry Cooper and Jodi Bruhn (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008).

2. The one exception is Jeffrey C. Herndon, who in *Eric Voegelin and the Problem of Christian Political Order* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007) describes the similarity between Voegelin and Dawson in their understanding and use of Augustine in their works. However, this comparison is secondary to the broader theoretical question of Voegelin's conception of Christian political order.
3. *CW 34*, 33–34. For more about Voegelin's contribution to political science, refer to Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Press, 2000).
4. *CW 5*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (2000), 88–108. For more about Voegelin's theory of consciousness, refer to Steven R. McCarl, "Eric Voegelin's Theory of Consciousness," *The American Political Science Review* 86 (1992):1, 106–111; Barry Cooper, *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999); and Jerry Day, *Voegelin, Schelling, and the Philosophy of Historical Existence* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003).
5. *CW 6*, ed. David Walsh (2002), 68.
6. *CW 12*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (1990), 305–306.
7. *CW 6*, 68–69, 335–336.
8. Ibid., 76–77.
9. Ibid., 69–70.
10. Ibid., 76–77; also refer to CW *12*, 289–291.
11. *CW 12*, 306.
12. *CW 5*, 76–77.
13. Ibid., 88.
14. *CW 12*, 115–116.
15. *CW 18*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (2000), 23–24, 29, 31–32, 36, 81.
16. *CW 12*, 119–122.
17. Ibid., 123–124.
18. *CW 5*, 138.
19. Ibid., 138; *CW 14*, ed. Maurice P. Hogan (2001), 19–24; also refer to 39–50.
20. *CW 14*, 19–24.
21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., 89–90; *CW 5*, 150–151.
23. *CW 5*, 183–186.
24. Voegelin used the terms "external history" and "temporal history" interchangeably. Both terms correspond to Augustine's idea of the history of the city of man. Despite their similarities, it is important to note that Voegelin believed external history would never cease, whereas Augustine did believe it would, although no one knows when this would occur (*De Civitate Dei*, XVIII.53). For more about the similarities and differences between Augustine and Voegelin, refer to *CW 5*, 175–178, 295–313; John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001); Mark Mitchell, "Regarding the Balance: An Augustinian Response to Eric Voegelin," *Humanitas* XV (2002): 1, 4–31; and Robert McMahon, "Augustine's *Confessions* and Voegelin's Philosophy," *Modern Age* 48 (Winter 2006): 1, 37–46.
25. *CW 14*, 23.
26. *CW 5*, 175–178, 295–313.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid. For Voegelin's relationship to modernity, refer to *Eric Voegelin and the Modern Continental Tradition*, Lee Trepanier and Steven F. McGuire, eds. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011).
29. Ibid.
30. Voegelin believed that only a few people were capable of divine-human experiences and could symbolize them as ordering principles for societies. *CW 29*, ed. William Petropulos (2009), 63.
31. *CW 14*, 427.
32. Ibid., 427–428. For Voegelin, all articulations of experiences, including dogma, doctrine, and creed, were symbolic in the sense that the articulation of the experience is separate from the experience itself. This explains Voegelin's ambiguous attitude toward the value of dogma, doctrine, and creed because, although the content may be true, the reception of it is one in which the articulation is often mistaken for the experience itself. The result is someone who believes the truth not for experiential reasons but for symbolic ones and therefore is more vulnerable to ideological manipulation.
33. An event in metaleptic reality is when humans encounter the divine in their consciousness as meditative reflection rather than through dogmatic instruction. *CW 17*, ed. Michael Franz (2000), 307.
34. Ibid., 83.
35. *CW 12*, 174.

36. For more about Voegelin's conception and relationship to Christianity, refer to Bruce Douglass, "The Gospel and Political Order: Eric Voegelin on the Political Role of Christianity," *The Journal of Politics* 38 (1976): 1, 24–45; James Rhodes, "Voegelin and Christian Faith," *Center Journal* 2 (1983): 3, 44–67; Michael P. Federici, "Voegelin's Christian Critics," *Modern Age* 36 (1994): 4, 331–340; William Thompson-Uberuaga, *Jesus and the Gospel Movement* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006); Herndon, *Eric Voegelin and the Problem of Christian Political Order* (2007); Michael Henry, "Eric Voegelin on the Incarnate Christ," *Modern Age* 50 (2008): 4, 332–344; and John J. Ranieri, *Disturbing Revelation: Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, and the Bible* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009).
37. Voegelinian scholars have explained social and historical change but have not identified this problem of culture in Voegelin's methodology. For example, refer to Ellis Sandoz's *A Government of Laws: Political Theory, Religion, and the American Founding* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001) and *Republicanism, Religion, and the Soul of America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006); Glenn A. Moots, *Politics Reformed: The Anglo-American Legacy of Covenant Theology* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010); and Scott Philip Segrest, *America and the Political Philosophy of Common Sense* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010).
38. Christopher Dawson, *The Dynamics of World History* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1957), 333.
39. Ibid., 335.
40. Ibid., 352.
41. Ibid.
42. Gibbon argued that Christianity's emphasis on the afterlife contributed to a loss of Roman civic life that, in turn, led to the decline of the Roman Empire. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 179–233.
43. Dawson, *Dynamics*, 333–334.
44. Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1948), 131.
45. Ibid., 47.
46. Ibid., 56.
47. Ibid., 48–49.
48. Ibid.
49. Dawson, *Dynamics*, 388.
50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 159.
52. Ibid., 56–57.
53. Ibid., 387.
54. Ibid., 50.
55. Voegelin did look to literature as a source of symbolization of the divine-human encounter. The most famous example of this was his essay, "On Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*," in *CW 12*, 134–171. Also refer to Charles Embry, ed., *The Philosopher and the Storyteller: Eric Voegelin and Twentieth-Century Literature* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008) and *Voegelinian Readings of Modern Literature* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011); and Glenn Hughes, *A More Beautiful Question: The Spiritual in Poetry and Art* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011) for other examples. Voegelin also spoke of the primordial community of being—God, man, world, and society—that constituted historical existence. However, Voegelin did not demonstrate how these other factors actually worked in his methodology. In his major publications, Voegelin focused only on the divine-human encounter and neglected these other factors.
56. Dawson, *Religion and Culture*, 198.
57. Ibid.
58. Dawson, *Dynamics*, 8–9.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid., 7.
61. Ibid., 9, 56.
62. Dawson, *Religion and Culture*, 52.
63. Ibid., 53.
64. Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 67; *Crisis of Western Education* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), 32.
65. Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture* (New York: Sheed & Ward), 303.
66. Dawson, *Dynamics*, 11.
67. Ibid., 21.
68. Ibid., 14–15.
69. Augustine, *City of God* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1972), 46.
70. Christopher Dawson, "The Social Factor in the Problem of Christian Unity," *Colosseum* 4 (1983): 11, 14; "Is the Church Too Western to Satisfy the Aspirations of the Modern World?" in *World Crisis and the Catholic: Studies Published on the Occasion of the Second World Congress for Lay Apostolate (Rome)* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958), 168. Also refer to

Dawson, *Dynamics*, 294–325 and Bradley Birzer, *Sanctifying the World* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 2007), 63–93.

71. Augustine, *City of God*, 591.
72. Christopher Dawson, "The Problem of Christ and Culture," *Dublin Review* 226 (1952): 64.
73. Dawson, *Dynamics*, 320.
74. Ibid., 297.
75. There is a dispute about the extent that Dawson adopted Thomism in his work. Davies and White claimed that Dawson was a neo-Thomist, while Hitchcock and Mulloy argued that Thomism was a secondary influence in Dawson's works. Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, Vol. 5 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 184; Hayden White, "Religion, Culture, and Western Civilization in Christopher Dawson's Idea of History," *English Miscellany* 9 (1958): 247–287; James Hitchcock, "Post-Mortem on a Rebirth: The Catholic Intellectual Renaissance," *American Scholar* 49 (1980): 211–225; and John J. Mulloy, "Christopher Dawson and G. K. Chesterton," *Chesterton Review* 9 (1983): 226–232.
76. Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1992), 173–175.
77. Christopher Dawson, *The Formation of Christendom* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), 242.
78. Christopher Dawson, "The Kingdom of God and History," in *Christianity and European Culture: Selections from the Works of Christopher Dawson*, Gerald Russello, ed. (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 206; *Religion and Rise of Western Civilization* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1950), 237.
79. Christopher Dawson, "Relationship between Religion and Culture," *Commonweal* 49 (1949): 489. Although he also was influenced by social scientists like Comte, Durkheim, and Weber, Dawson actually believed—and argued—that religion was not only foundational to the definition of culture but also had legitimate truth claims. By contrast, Comte, Durkheim, and Weber rejected the truth claims of religion as social scientists because of their positivist adherence to the fact-value distinction.
80. Dawson, *Religion and Culture*, 48–49.
81. Ibid., 25.
82. Dawson, *Dynamics*, 234. For more about secondary literature on Dawson's metahistory and interpretation of Christian culture, refer to Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 63–93, and Peter J. Cataldo, *The Dynamics Character of Christian Cultures: Essays on Dawsonian Themes* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

83. Christopher Dawson, "Hope and Culture: Christian Culture as a Culture of Hope," *Lumen Vitae* 9 (1954): 428.
84. Christopher Dawson, "The European Revolution," *Catholic World* 179 (1954): 90.
85. Christopher Dawson, "Christianity and the Humanist Tradition," *Dublin Review* 226 (1952): 2.
86. Dawson, "Hope and Culture," 430.
87. Dawson, *Formation*, 14; *Essays in Order* (New York: MacMillan, 1931), vii; also refer to Dermot Quinn, "Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History," in *Eternity in Time*, Stratford Caldecott and John Morrill, eds. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 69–92.
88. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 1–72; Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 25–72; also refer to Fernando Cervantes, "Christopher Dawson and Europe," in *Eternity in Time*, Stratford Caldecott and John Morrill, eds. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 51–68.
89. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 117–40; *The Making of Europe*, 103–117.
90. Dawson, *Dynamics*, 239.
91. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 21.
92. Christopher Dawson, *Medieval Essays* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1954), 64; also refer to Michael O'Brien, "Historical Imagination and the Renewal of Culture," in *Eternity in Time*, Stratford Caldecott and John Morrill, eds. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 151–192.
93. Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 132.
94. For more about the problems of ideologies for the modern Western civilization, refer to Christopher Dawson, *The Gods of Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1972) and Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 123–149.
95. Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 228.
96. Christopher Dawson, "Foundations of a European Order," *Catholic Mind* 42 (1944): 314.
97. Dawson, *Dynamics*, 103–104.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid., 4.
100. For more about Dawson's life, refer to Christopher Dawson, "Why I Am a Catholic," *Chesterton Review* 9 (1983): 110–113; Christina Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1991).
101. Christopher Dawson, "The Relation of Philosophy to Culture," September 7, 1955, ND/CDAW, Box/Folder: 1/15.

102. Like Dawson, Voegelin believed that ideas needed to be studied in their specific historical context. To accomplish this task, Voegelin wrote an eight-volume work, *The History of Political Ideas* (*CW* 19–26), that began with the Pre-Socratics and concluded with Nietzsche. However, this work was not published because it did not incorporate his theory of consciousness that he discovered after *The History of Political Ideas* was completed. With this theory of consciousness, Voegelin published the five-volume *Order and History* (*CW* 14–18) that included new material. In all his works, Voegelin did his own translations, which required him to learn at least a dozen languages, as well as included the latest secondary literature on these subjects. In this sense, Voegelin's philosophical task was essentially a historical one and, as a work of history, rivaled, if not surpassed, Dawson in breadth, depth, and rigor.

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Wrestling with the Modern State

Christopher Dawson and the Background to *The Crisis of Western Education*

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In 1961 Christopher Dawson published *The Crisis of Western Education* to promote the study of Christian culture in Western Universities, especially religiously affiliated institutions, as the means of revitalizing Western civilization. *Crisis* outlined the history of Western education and the need for its revival in a form different than a pragmatic secular approach, a classical humanist approach, a "Great Books" approach, or a Thomistic-philosophical approach, each of which competed for influence in educational circles after World War II. Dawson confronted the relation of the secular state to education, claiming that "universal education," promoted by the modern state, was "very largely responsible" for the "secularization of modern culture." He insisted that Christianity and secularism "are inevitably and in every field irreconcilable with one another." He hoped that his program, if implemented in universities, would influence primary and secondary education by producing well-informed teachers who would teach young students their cultural heritage. Dawson noted that the "vital problem of Christian education is a sociological one: how to make students culturally conscious of their religion; otherwise they will be divided personalities—with a Christian faith and a pagan culture which contradict one another continually."[1] The crisis of modern education was both political and cultural.

This article examines the development of Dawson's educational ideas and their reception in the United States. The first part demonstrates that Dawson's perspective on the modern state,

which he developed in *Religion and the Modern State* (1936), *Beyond Politics* (1939), and *The Judgement of the Nations* (1942), reveals the logic behind his educational proposals and acceptance of public education. While condemning the ruthless secularism of the modern state in its various forms, fascist, socialist, and democratic, Dawson realized that Christians could not retreat completely from public life and must work through the culture to transform secular institutions to meet Christian goals. The second part of the article asserts that the poor reception *Crisis* received in the United States can be explained by the context, both Catholic and secular, of the post-World War II environment. The content of *Crisis* was not new. Dawson had published most of it between 1946 and 1960 while engaging Catholic critics opposed to his approach. By 1957, after struggling to gain Catholic support for his plans, he wrote that his project could apply to secular universities as well. But Dawson had less support in the secular scene than he had in Catholic circles. Dawson's earlier critiques of liberalism placed him on the political right in the United States. The post-World War II conservative intellectual revival in the United States had a significant Catholic influence but possessed a stronger hostility to the state than did Dawson. Thus, Dawson's crowning work failed to attract a following, and Dawson's reputation, especially after his 1962 stroke, declined so that today he is little known.

The Catholic Revival of the early twentieth century shaped Dawson's career and reputation in both Europe and the United States. The Revival, which began in Europe, had its roots in the renewal of medieval scholastic philosophy by Pope Leo XIII in the 1880s. The neoscholastic movement, which dominated Catholic higher education in the United States in the early twentieth century, used reason to support the claims of faith. Following St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, the neoscholastics believed that human beings could comprehend reality, God's existence, and the proper order of creation through reason. Neoscholastics rejected the subjectivism and determinism of modern philosophy. As William Halsey has suggested, neoscholasticism was both "aggressive" and optimistic. By billing itself as the common-sense

philosophy for Everyman, neoscholasticism refused to be confined to the cultural margins. Secularists, who had long considered Catholics as unintellectual and superstitious, found Catholic Thomists attacking secularism on philosophical grounds. Philip Gleason has argued that neoscholastics saw philosophy, rather than theology or history, as the integrative discipline that provided the intellectual framework for all other branches of knowledge.[2] Dawson, while not a philosopher, participated in the Catholic Revival.

After World War I, European intellectuals fought to make sense of the horrific destruction suffered throughout Europe. The established order had failed, and numerous competitors jockeyed for political, cultural, and economic control of post-war Europe. Sheed & Ward, Dawson's publisher, agreed to publish a series of short books, *Essays in Order*, designed to present the Catholic point of view. Dawson, an editor of the series, would collaborate with other European Catholics, for example, Jacques Maritain, Peter Wust, and E. I. Watkin, to engage modernity and articulate a Catholic vision for cultural renewal. Dawson believed that Catholic intellectuals could help revive Western civilization by restoring an "intellectual community of European culture."[3] To this end Dawson participated in several projects with new and established Catholic journals and joined an ecumenical intellectual organization, The Moot, to promote Christian efforts to confront the forces of secularism.[4] Much of his subsequent intellectual career was shaped by the direction he took in his introductory essay to the *Essays in Order* series.

In his introduction, Dawson defined the crisis of Western civilization as a spiritual one stemming from the rejection of Christianity as the principle of order. Philosophical materialism comprised part of the crisis, while "the attempt to treat the spiritual order and the business of everyday life as two independent worlds which have no mutual relations" represented the other problem. Secularism had drained Christianity of its rigor. But, Dawson noted, "men demand of religion that it should be in touch with realities, that it should offer some solution to the social and intellectual problems of the modern world and that it should be at the service of human needs."[5]

The secular alternative to Christian order, "Liberalism and Progress," had been discredited in part by the events of the twentieth century. By removing many of the "restrictive factors" on human behavior, modern politicians had destroyed the "balance" needed by human beings. Liberation from restraint had not made life better but instead had led to social chaos and violence. The Industrial Revolution and capitalism, for example, had reshaped human life but brought enormous human and cultural costs. Progress, therefore, was neither a "necessary" nor "automatic process."[6] "The exaltation of man and the idealisation of Nature led to the depreciation and denial of spiritual reality," Dawson charged.[7] This position was no longer tenable after the destruction of the Great War.

Catholicism, for Dawson, provided the remedy to modern ills by taking spiritual reality and the transcendence of the Divine seriously. "Catholicism stands essentially for a universal order in which every good and every truth of the natural or the social order can find a place," Dawson wrote. Thus, Catholicism seeks "to order the whole of life towards unity, not by the denial and destruction of the natural human values, but by bringing them into living relation with spiritual truth and spiritual reality." Catholics had to engage the world around them and not "remain passively content with their own possession of the truth." Catholics could not segregate the "natural and the supernatural orders." Instead, Catholicism realized that the world was infused with spiritual significance. Thus, "there is not the smallest event in human life and social history but possesses an eternal and spiritual significance." Catholicism, he warned, has no "definite solution" or a "formal programme" for all material problems.[8] The Catholic, however, by engaging the specific context of the modern world was to be an instrument of Divine grace. As Dawson mentioned at the end of his essay later in the volume, "[a] Christian has only to *be* in order to change the world, for in that act of being there is contained all the mystery of supernatural life."[9] Catholics, simply by taking a place at the modern table, aroused powerful opposition.

Dawson identified four major challengers to the Catholic ideal of unity, all of whom sought unity and order in secular terms. Communism, Dawson feared, threatened Christian order. So, he said, did liberal democracy, which accepted economic materialism and secularism.[10] Socialism and nationalism comprised the final two threats to Christian order. Dawson labored during the 1930s to point out the deficiencies in these four challengers. He also identified the "new bureaucratic state, that 'coldest of cold monsters,'" as a tremendous threat to human life. Modern cultural development had led society "into an individualistic atomism" which subjected individuals to the merciless power of the modern state. The state exerted "a more irresistible and far-reaching control over the individual life than was ever possessed by the absolute monarchies of the old regime."[11]

Dawson's critique of modern life led him to consider reform. In respect to his claims about Catholicism, did Catholicism present a viable alternative to the rest of the powerful ideologies? And, if it were true that Catholicism prescribed no "formal programme," then how would Catholics unite for effective action?[12] Catholics, acting as Catholics, did not control the political apparatus of any of the major European countries. Could Catholics attach themselves to existing movements—perhaps one of the four challengers to the Catholic principle of unity—or would they have to find a separate way? Dawson's line of argument inevitably led him to propose a plan of action. For if Western civilization was in crisis and Catholicism held the solution, then Catholics would have to develop and implement a program of reform and renewal. This would thrust them into the political arena and force them to confront the modern state. Dawson always repeated and built on his previous writings. The problems he identified in 1931 would be addressed in turn. He first directed his attention to Catholicism's competitors and then developed a strategy for Catholics to use the modern state to further their goals.

When Dawson penned *Religion and the Modern State* in 1936, he joined a broader intellectual project of critiquing the growing power of the nation state. During the 1930s and 1940s several works

challenged the rise of the modern state from a variety of perspectives. *I'll Take My Stand* (1930) by the Vanderbilt Agrarians, Frederick Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), George Orwell's *1984* (1949), and Richard Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948) were a few of the works that made a significant intellectual impact in the Anglo-American world. Dawson wanted to entitle his work *The New Leviathan* to summarize the message of the book, but, despite Dawson's opposition, his publisher gave the work the title *Religion and the Modern State*.[13] The book continued the themes of his writings in *Essays in Order* while his findings led to further book projects.

Dawson noted that Western civilization had "something profoundly wrong" with it that "must be cured before modern civilization" could "become really healthy." The "path of progress" had been particularly "bloody" for Europe.[14] For Dawson the most dangerous artifact of modern civilization was the modern state, which he traced to the "process of secularization in Western history." Religious violence in the aftermath of the Reformation had destroyed "religious unity and religious faith" while challenging "those objective and moral standards and values which provided a spiritual basis for social and political life." Stronger nation states arose to check the destructive violence. Dawson pointed out that the strengthening of the state in the twentieth century was a "spiritual reaction against the materialism of nineteenth-century bourgeois society." The new states, especially fascist and communist ones, justified their existence on spiritual grounds as forming "a new spiritual community" of the nation. For Dawson, this development was particularly dangerous for the state had become "a competitor with the Church on its own ground."[15] The modern state claimed greater inclusivity and provided a pseudo-spiritual bond of unity. It demanded the "whole of man." Dawson preached intellectual resistance: "Christianity is bound to protest against any social system which claims the whole of man and sets itself up as the final end of human action, for it asserts that man's essential nature transcends all political and economic forms."[16] By the 1930s, church and state represented not only rival institutions but also opposite philosophical positions on human nature.

Dawson believed that the state sought "control in every department of life" and used several powers to achieve its end. First, the state introduced "universal compulsory education." This "put into the hands of the State the power and responsibility of forming the minds of the youth of the nation."[17] The control of young minds contributed to the state's efforts "to control public opinion in general by its organs of instruction and propaganda," including the media. Second, the modern state initiated "universal military service," a necessary prerequisite for the total wars of the twentieth century. Finally, the state extended its "economic control," which was "now the most important factor of all."[18] By attempting to control private property, the lives of young men, and the minds of its population, the modern state would try to "guide the life of its citizens from the cradle to the grave." Dawson warned: "The new state will be universal and omnicompetent." It would "not tolerate any interference with its educational functions" or any other parts of its control. He concluded: "It will be impossible to go one's own way, as in the old days, and leave the state in control of politics. For there will be no department of life in which the state will not intervene and which will not be obliged to conform to the mechanized order of the new society."[19] Dawson sounded like the most strident of libertarians in his condemnations.

Dawson believed that Christians could respond to the dire situation in a variety of ways but hesitated to prescribe any particular response. The Church could condemn the state "and prepare itself for resistance to the secular power and for persecution." Or it could "ally itself with the political and social forces that are hostile to the new State." The Church could "limit its resistance to cases of State interference in ecclesiastical matters or in theological questions." The Church could also explore whether its current difficulties with nation states were temporary and that "the new forms of authority and political organisation" might be "reconcilable in principle with Christian ideas."[20] Dawson admitted that "it is much easier to state the objections … than to find a solution" to the problems. In *Religion and the Modern State* he did not propose a definite strategy. He concluded that "the true social function of religion is not to

busy itself with economic or political reforms, but to save civilization from itself by revealing to men the true end of life and the true nature of reality."[21] But Dawson's statement did not answer the dilemma he set out earlier. He merely repeated his earlier critiques.

Dawson did indicate false starts at reform but would wait to elaborate his solutions in later writings. He charged that none of the major competitors for establishing order—National Socialism, communism, and liberal democracy—would work. All were "really three forms of the same thing" and were "moving by different but parallel paths to the same goal, which is the mechanization of human life and the complete subordination of the individual to the state and to the economic process." All three movements owed debts to Christianity. Nationalism owed "its high and almost mystical conception of the nation as a spiritual unity" to Christianity, while liberalism and democracy relied on the Christian tradition for "their humanitarian idealism and their faith in progress." Socialism's "passion for social justice, and for the rights of the poor and disinherited," came from Christian culture.[22] But all three rejected the full message of the Gospel. Finally, Dawson reminded his readers that "no age has the right to call itself Christian in an absolute sense," thus negating a romantic attempt to revive a previous age. This point separated him from Catholic distributists like G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc.[23] *Religion and the Modern State* proved to be a diagnosis without a proposed cure.

As World War II broke out in 1939, Dawson published *Beyond Politics*, which built on *Religion and the Modern State* and provided more concrete proposals. Recognizing that Christians must choose sides in the coming conflict, Dawson believed that the Western democracies were the only hope. But he made it clear that Christians should support these governments in their efforts against National Socialism and communism as a temporary measure. They should not adopt the philosophy of liberalism that undergird these powers. *Beyond Politics* functioned as an extended critique of liberalism.

Dawson separated democracy from liberalism and then showed the flaws of each. He pointed out that "democracy and dictatorship

are not opposites or mortal enemies, but twin children of the great Revolution."[24] Democrats of the late eighteenth century misidentified liberty as the "right of the mass to power." As the example of the French Revolution demonstrated, pure mass democracy became destructive and dangerous. "A pure democracy," Dawson indicated, "which sets equality above every other social value can adapt itself to a totalitarian organization as easily as a pure autocracy."[25] In fact, nineteenth-century liberalism, Dawson believed, arose partially in reaction to the democratic excesses of the French Revolution. Liberals sought "to diminish the power and prestige of the community in favour of the individual." Thus, they made the state "policeman and keeper of the peace" and the "inglorious and necessary servant" of the community. Dawson believed that liberalism left religion isolated and separated from "social reality," allowing the liberal state to become "the servant of material interests which developed unguided and unchecked, in an atmosphere of spiritual anarchy." The state assumed "responsibility" for the "smooth functioning of the economic machine." When the economy failed, liberalism itself was called into question and communism, socialism, and fascism arose to address the weaknesses of the liberal state.[26] The aggressive organization of communities under liberalism's competitors made a laissez-faire approach an inadequate solution to modern problems.[27] Something positive was necessary.

Dawson believed that Christians could organize groups to promote the renewal of culture and spiritual traditions in order to transform the modern state. Liberalism had been a "half-way house" that supported freedom "without metaphysical certainty or Christian dogma."[28] By embracing a free society and then pointing the way back to the transcendent order, Christians could renew Britain. Dawson himself was heavily involved in such a movement in the 1940s, the short-lived, ecumenical Sword of the Spirit movement. He insisted that Great Britain had to "transform" its "disordered society into a living community without sacrificing the old liberal-democratic ideals of freedom and humanity."[29] The Church played a role in this but had to be independent of the state and remain dedicated to its spiritual mission.[30] Distinguishing his

position from classical liberalism, Dawson noted, "The Church's real enemy is not the State but the World; that is to say secular civilization considered as a closed order which shuts out God from human life and deifies its own power and wealth."[31] Thus, Christians should work to "transform the world by bringing every side of human existence and every human activity into contact with the sources of supernatural life." For Dawson this meant that Christians should even seek to influence "the modern State, that new Leviathan." It, he noted, "must be transformed and reconsecrated, as the power of the barbarian warrior became transfigured into the sacred office of a Christian King."[32] Dawson indicated that his solution to the problem of the modern state was to take it over, transform it, and use it for good. He would suggest ways to do so in his 1942 book *The Judgement of the Nations.*

The Judgement of the Nations continued Dawson's analysis of the modern state and called for a renewed commitment to spiritual unity to combat the powers of darkness during World War II. In the foreword to the book, Dawson noted that it took him four years to write the piece and "cost me greater labour and thought than any book that I have written."[33] The world faced its greatest crisis as "liberty and reason are being destroyed by the very powers they created." "Humanity" was "slipping blindly and helplessly toward the abyss." Western civilization, founded on the ideals of Christianity, faced "new powers armed with all the resources of modern scientific technique, which are inspired by the ruthless will to power, that recognizes no law save that of their own strength." For Dawson, "Britain and America" stood "as the bulwark of freedom of the world." They could preserve the Western ideal of freedom that came from "the Christian belief in the absolute and unique value of the human soul which infinitely transcends all the wealth and the power and the glory of the world." "Christianity and humanism and social freedom" shared a "spiritual affinity" that must be appreciated by all who sought to the preserve the West in its hour of crisis.[34]

Dawson believed that disunity weakened Western culture and would play a major role if the Allies (representing what remained

of Western culture) suffered defeat in World War II. In *Judgement* Dawson indicted religious disunity above all for the plight of Western culture. Since the Reformation, Protestants and Catholics had been unable to recognize their common cultural inheritance and instead had divided into different social groups. Each group then justified its existence with different ideologies and theologies. Religious disunity, in part, led to the creation of the modern state that was now destroying Western culture. Dawson believed that Christians as well as liberals opposed to totalitarianism must "recall" the "essential values" that they "must preserve at all costs." The old political parties could not achieve this restoration. "It can only be done," Dawson insisted, perhaps referencing his own participation in the Sword of the Spirit movement, "by the free co-operation of all those who recognize their inherence in the common spiritual tradition of Western civilization and the necessity of creating an organic communion between the scattered and disorganized elements of freedom which still exist though they are politically divided and almost powerless." This new freedom movement could use the "new powers that man has acquired during the last half century … in the service of freedom."[35] The secularization of Western culture—the "dislocation between religion and culture"—could also be rectified by a revival of the unified "spiritual vision" of Christianity.[36]

Dawson devoted the second half of *Judgement* to plans for restoring Western culture. He confronted first a major difficulty. Dawson celebrated freedom and attacked the modern state for its ruthless efficiency. But, if Western Christian ideals needed restoration in order to triumph, could Western leaders use their power—and thus the power of the modern state—to plan a culture of freedom? Dawson tentatively answered in the affirmative. "The planning of culture cannot be undertaken in a dictatorial spirit," he noted. The medieval cultural arrangement provided guidance. "In the Middle Ages," Dawson contended, "religion did in fact create the cultural institutions that guided and controlled the mind of society, so that all the higher activities of culture were, if not scientifically planned, at least given spiritual form and unity." Dawson

recognized that any attempt by the state to establish a religious group to plan culture was doomed to failure.[37] Instead, only religious unity could inspire a vibrant religious culture that could begin consciously directing the broader culture.

Christian intellectuals, according to Dawson, must lead Western culture to true freedom. Intellectuals must point to "Christian freedom, not a freedom of economic materialism and individual selfishness." Christian intellectuals must push for "a social order directed to spiritual ends, in which every man has a chance to use his freedom for the service of God according to his own powers and gifts."[38] The new society must protect elements that "have hitherto been left to take care of themselves," particularly individual freedom.[39] This necessitated not solely an intellectual defense but protection by the state.

Dawson implied that Christians must infiltrate the modern state to have a chance at renewing the culture of the West. He envisioned Christian bureaucrats at the controls of the apparatus of the modern state. Dawson affirmed that two principles governed his proposal, "freedom of association," which would guard against the totalitarian claims of the state, and "freedom of vocation," an ethic of "personal responsibility" that "subordinates the profit motive to a non-economic end," which would, presumably, allow individuals to resist the lure of power. He acknowledged, "There is obviously a danger that bureaucratic planning may destroy freedom no less completely than totalitarian dictatorship." But, he wrote, "it is not necessary and inevitable, since the system is not in itself irreconcilable with the principle of freedom of vocation." Dawson trusted a Christian-administered modern state in which the "public servant" was "a freeman and a citizen." Freedom of association alone would "expend itself in an anarchic proliferation of rival and overlapping groups" or would "degenerate into an exploitation of group selfishness in which comradeship becomes an excuse for graft and corruption." But when joined to the principle of vocation, it could "serve the higher order of culture" and create "the conditions under which man's freedom is spiritually fruitful." Dawson concluded: "If this spirit can be applied to the new

conditions of mass society, it is conceivable that a planned society might be created without the destruction of freedom either by impersonal bureaucracy or by inhuman tyranny."[40]

Thus, Dawson's vigorous critique of the modern state, begun a decade earlier, ended in a call for Christians to use the state to achieve their goals. This could be done through a shift in cultural outlook rather than in the aggressive style of practical party politics. He envisioned Christians undermining the claims of the modern state through practicing and promoting Christian culture and its intellectual supports within society and the state's apparatus. Dawson's solution to the problem of the modern state led him to propose in the 1950s a plan to staff the most vigorous bureaucracy of the modern state—the educational system—with workers imbued with an understanding of Christian culture.

The massive destruction to Western civilization caused by World War II both frightened Dawson and prompted him to search for a cultural rebuilding program in education. For approximately fifteen years following the War, Dawson wrote pieces on his plans to implement a Christian culture curriculum in Catholic colleges and actively debated many Catholic scholars in the pages of journals. His status in America grew after Harvard University named him the first Stillman Chair of Catholic Studies in 1958. The United States intrigued Dawson, who remarked at his seventieth birthday celebration in Massachusetts that the "fate of Christendom" would be decided in America.[41] Dawson believed that if his educational proposal would be implemented in the United States, a society that devoted a plethora of resources to education, many of the challenges posed by secularism could be met. He picked up where *The Judgement of the Nations* left off and tried to apply his solutions in a new context. The American scene proved more challenging than Dawson anticipated.

The American Catholic world Dawson entered had been shaped by the controversies among Catholics, Protestants, and American liberals from the 1920s through the 1950s. The massive immigration of the early twentieth century revived American nativism. Nativists often collaborated with the emerging progressive

movement, which preached loyalty to a centralized nation state and "American values." The Catholic hierarchy in the late nineteenth century, fearing the loss of Catholic identity, had expanded significantly the parochial school system. The mixture of parochial schools and new immigrant cultures created a Catholic subculture that frightened other Americans. During the 1920s, for example, the revived Ku Klux Klan and an invigorated American Freemasonry attacked Catholics as superstitious, uneducated, and disloyal Americans. Anti-Catholicism hit its apex in Al Smith's failed presidential bid in 1928.[42] In addition, as historian Douglas Slawson has noted, the movement among progressive forces in the wake of World War I to create a federal department of education came partially as a response to the feared "otherness" of the Catholic population. Several states considered banning private education, a measure targeted at Catholic schools.[43] During the 1930s, secular liberals pointed to the popularity among Catholics of the radio priest Charles Coughlin, who openly admired Mussolini, and the Catholic support of Franco in the Spanish Civil War as proof of Catholic attraction to fascism and authoritarianism and Catholics' incompatibility with democratic culture.[44] By the late 1940s and 1950s, as John McGreevy has noted, social scientists, looking to further demonize Catholicism, published statistical analyses of economic and social indicators in Catholic and Protestant countries to demonstrate Catholic inferiority. In 1949, Paul Blanshard published *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, a warning about growing Catholic political power in America, to the acclaim of militant secularist intellectuals such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell.[45] Clearly, Catholics in America faced determined cultural and institutional resistance.

Catholics responded to the hostility in a variety of ways, especially celebrating the Catholic Revival. The Catholic Revival, according to Arnold Sparr, reached its heyday in the United States between 1935 and 1960. Neoscholasticism, while a main feature of the Revival, was not the only facet of Catholic thinking. Revival thinkers shared the view that secularism was the main problem of modernity, causing economic, political, social, and religious

disorder. They believed that Catholicism offered a viable, reasonable way to escape secularism. Advocates of the revival saw themselves, as Douglas Slawson has noted, as standing for the "traditional values" that would save the United States from cultural collapse. Sitting on the sidelines, therefore, was not an option for Catholics. Many Catholics believed, Philip Gleason insists, that they could "simply persuade society to accept their position."[46]

The Revival branched off in different directions as individual Catholics focused on particular solutions to secularism's challenges. The result was a fractured movement. The liturgical movement of Virgil Michel, Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker, distributism, the Catholic Legion of Decency, Frank Sheed's Catholic Evidence Guild, and various educational reforms, including the ideas of Christopher Dawson, demonstrated a diverse array of tactics and positions. Arnold Sparr and Philip Gleason maintained that the development of "the theology of the Mystical Body of Christ" and Christopher Dawson's language of culture provided intellectual coherence to the movement, but clearly Catholic Revival thinkers varied widely on political and economic issues.[47]

The diversity of the Catholic Revival made collective efforts at reform difficult, as Christopher Dawson would discover. In his book on Catholic higher education in the modern United States, Philip Gleason noted that Catholic intellectuals in the 1930s, many of them neoscholastics, tried to devise a plan of curricular reform "to specify how the liberal arts ideal should be actualized through the curricular content of Catholic colleges and universities." The efforts of Aristotelians Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler at the University of Chicago to implement curricular reform through the Great Books program inspired many Catholics. Other intellectuals sought to apply the recommendations of John Henry Newman's *Idea of a University* to reform. Efforts at reform halted with the advent of World War II, but after the war, Catholic educators, anticipating an influx of new university students due to the G.I. Bill, sought to define a liberal arts education to which all could agree. A number of Catholics argued for the integration of religion and the liberal arts with the rest of the curriculum. As Gleason

discovered, there was much discussion but little consensus on the proper Catholic education. Reform stalled.[48]

Christopher Dawson entered the existing discussion on education with a 1946 article in the European journal *Lumen Vitae*.[49] Those American Catholics familiar with the Catholic Revival knew Dawson's work well. Thus, he came to the discussion as a respected authority. Dawson connected his positions on education with his conclusions in *The Judgement of the Nations*. Acknowledging that secularism was the crux of the problem and that public education seemed to spread this view, Dawson warned that a secularized society was "inhuman in the absolute sense—hostile to human life and irreconcilable with human nature itself," a position that he had elaborated upon in *Judgement.* Dawson noted that "it is only by the rediscovery of the spiritual world and the restoration of man's spiritual capacities that it is possible to save humanity from self-destruction." For Dawson that was "the immense task which Christian education has to undertake."[50] He indicated that universal education had destroyed the "old hierarchy of divinity, humanity and natural science that was the tradition of European higher education" and had instituted utilitarianism as the reigning philosophy of the school. In higher education, specialization, a function of the utilitarian search for employment, continued the downward spiral. These approaches destroyed the humanistic basis of learning. Dawson questioned the ideal of universal education: "Indeed the extension of public education—that is to say the attempt of a single uniform educational system to mould the whole mind of the whole community by a single all embracing educational system—only increases the mass mindedness of modern society without raising its cultural standards or deepening its spiritual life."[51] While suspicious of universal education directed by the state, Dawson realized that it was a powerful tool. The above quotation reveals that Dawson's main concern was not the power of the government over the minds of its citizens but the particular forms and doctrines of the secular schools that destroyed culture and spirituality.

Dawson's comments on education invoke, to echo the sociologist Joseph Varacalli, the idea that Catholicism must be presented

as a plausible way of life.[52] The Enlightenment critique of Christianity painted it as a religion of simpleminded fools and hypocrites with impossible ideals. Dawson noted that "Christian education is … an initiation into the Christian way of life and thought, and for one thousand two hundred years, more or less, the peoples of Europe have been submitted to this influence." Christian education was "not only an initiation into the Christian community, it was also an initiation into *another world*: the unveiling of spiritual realities of which the natural man was unaware and which changed the meaning of existence." Drawing upon his own education, he noted that he learned "more—much more—during my school days from my visits to the Cathedral at Winchester than I did from the hours of religious instruction in school." These visits to the "tombs of the Saxon kings and the mediaeval statesmen Bishops gave one a much greater sense of the magnitude of the religious element in our culture and the depths of its roots in our national life than anything one could learn from books."[53] In other words, Dawson learned that Catholicism had shaped the world he inherited. It had, at least at one time, been a viable cultural force. Such a realization meant that Christianity could be a plausible alternative to secularism.

Dawson criticized the approach to religious education since the Reformation and pointed to a cultural solution. The use of the Catechism, which began in the sixteenth century, as the "method of religious instruction was of Protestant origin." While Dawson appreciated the "wider diffusion of literary culture and the intellectualizing of religious education" that emerged from the Renaissance and Reformation, he also saw in its effects an increased stress on "the practical and utilitarian elements of culture." "The fact is," he maintained, "that culture by itself—even a humanist culture that is intellectually aware of the spiritual values of Christianity—does not possess the power of restoring or transforming the life of society."[54] Dawson wanted an educational system that conveyed the reality of Christian culture and the possibilities of Christian life. Only such a system could save Western civilization from the trap of secularism.

Four years later, Dawson returned to his idea of Christian culture and offered clarifications about the content and purpose of his proposal. He noted two failed approaches to education. First, the classical humanist system of the study of the classical world would not suffice. Dawson noted: "The primary school taught children their letters, the grammar school taught them Latin and Greek, so that educated men everywhere possessed a common language and the knowledge of a common literature or two common literatures." But the traditional humanist education appeared to the moderns as "shockingly narrow and pedantic."[55] Thus, it suffered serious attacks in the nineteenth century from those who wanted students to learn modern contributions to knowledge. Second, the nationalistic approaches to education in which students study the "conflicts and rivalries of the various European states" was also defective. It ignored the cultural unity of Western civilization. Dawson insisted that "education has meant the transmission of culture."[56] The culture of the West was a Christian one in its foundation. He noted that educators should "accept the existence of Christian culture as an objective historical fact, and try to understand it by its own ideas and to judge it by its own standards, as classical scholars have done in the past with regard to the culture of the ancient world." A Christian culture approach would demand a new disposition to study. "Instead of these ways of looking at the past from outside as something alien," Dawson continued, "let us try to study Western Christian culture from the Christian point of view—to see it as a new way of life which was brought into Europe nearly nineteen hundred years ago when St. Paul set sail from Troy to Macedonia and gradually expanded until it became accepted as the universal standard of the European way of life."[57] This did not mean that Christians should view the study of Christian culture as an ideological project. Rather, Dawson saw the study as historically grounded and defensible through practical, reasoned arguments.

Dawson's 1952 book *Understanding Europe* contained a chapter on education entitled "The Problem of the Future: Total Secularization or a Return to Christian Culture," which repeated,

at times verbatim, points from his 1946 and 1950 articles. He stressed that "the secularization of modern culture is inseparably connected with the secularization of modern education and the passing of control from the Church and the old teaching corporations to the modern state." Dawson clarified his use of the term "culture," noting that it did not signify solely the culture of the elites. Christian culture represented the varied ways of life of the Mystical Body of Christ. The "mystery of faith brings all men together at the heart of life," and faith is "the beginning and end of Christian culture." He insisted that in the "Catholic view there is an organic relation between religion and culture." If secularism triumphed completely, not only Christian culture but also the faith faced danger. "The great obstacle," he concluded, "is the failure of Christians themselves to understand the depth of that tradition [Christian culture] and the inexhaustible possibilities of new life that it contains."[58]

Dawson expanded his comments on education in a 1953 lecture at University College, Dublin, by linking his views to those of John Henry Newman and by clarifying his historical approach to the study of Christian culture. Beginning the lecture with the observation that "the survival of a civilization depends on the continuity of its educational tradition," he noted that the disillusionment of Western intellectuals in the face of two destructive world wars had called into question the validity of the cult of progress and the traditions of Western civilization as a whole. Dawson turned briefly to Newman's thought. Newman, he wrote, "stood for the principle of unity in education, in religion and in culture" and understood the connection between Christianity and the West. Dawson believed that Newman foresaw the dire consequences for both education and culture of the separation of the liberal arts from theology and the replacement of theology by the "science of nature." The fragmentation of the disciplines into "a jungle of competing specialisms" inevitably resulted.[59] Dawson commented again on the flawed approach of Renaissance humanism in confining its study to the ancient world. But he also critiqued the new program of study proposed at Columbia University, which

advocated an "encyclopedic" study of modern civilization. The program was too "vague" for Dawson, even though he acknowledged that it did have relevance to the lives of students. Dawson insisted that a "unified study of Christian culture which would include Christian philosophy, Christian literature and Christian history, studied in close relation with one another," would be the best program. He noted that this meant studying different historical periods, not simply the European middle ages. For Dawson, "[t]he more deeply the student penetrates into this great religious and cultural unity [of the Christian West], the more aware he will become of the essential continuity of Western civilization and of the spiritual dynamism and fecundity of the Christian tradition." While acknowledging that his proposal might not be "practical" politically in the context of the modern university, Dawson believed that "the survival or restoration of Christian culture involves not only the fate of our own people and our own civilization, but the fate of humanity and the future of the world."[60]

In 1953 and 1954 Dawson published articles on education in *Commonweal* that encouraged American Catholics to battle for education within the wider culture. Recognizing the specific hostility to Catholicism in English-speaking cultures, he indicated that the existing "ghetto" solution was untenable, a theme that resonated with many American Catholic intellectuals who were seeking to reduce the hostility of American Protestants and liberals. Dawson pointed out that since the English Reformation, English-speaking Catholics inhabited a world that viewed them with contempt and suspicion. Shut out of the institutional life of the culture, Catholicism, in the interest of self-preservation, had to thrive in ghettos. The clergy studied religion while the lay people learned catechisms and secular knowledge. "If you cut down to the bone of religious faith and leave people with nothing else but the bare right of practicing their religion in a completely alien culture," Dawson concluded, "you are left with nothing but the fleshless skeleton of Catholicism."[61] He admired the "spiritual vitality of the Faith" in the "factory towns of England and the United States" but noted that "this witness was paid for by an

immense leakage of those who were unable to withstand the pressure of their cultural environment and by the narrowness of the type of Catholicism which survived." English-speaking Catholics were "forced to live by sheer faith, naked in an alien culture." The individual "spiritual merit" of such Catholics "may be all the higher, but his chance of social survival is much smaller and his opportunities to influence the society of his age much more restricted." In noting the difficulty of practicing a religious culture so widely removed from the dominant secular culture, Dawson compared ghetto Catholicism to that of the Germanic barbarian converts in the early Middle Ages: "It was in fact practically a culture-less Catholicism, a society of Christian barbarians."[62] Thus, English-speaking Catholics in particular needed to study Christian culture and appreciate the plausibility of Catholic culture. Dawson wrote in 1954:

> What is vital is to recover the moral and spiritual foundations on which the lives of both the individual and the culture depend: to bring home to the average man that religion is not a pious fiction which has nothing to do with the facts of life, but that it is concerned with realities, that it is in fact the pathway to reality and the law of life.

This meant recapturing higher education from the "secularists." "What I am thinking of is the need for educated Catholics to influence contemporary culture by broadening and deepening their own understanding of Catholicism and of Catholic culture," he wrote. Dawson told American Catholics that their job was very important because "it is only through the medium of culture that the Faith can penetrate civilization and transform the thought and ideology of modern society." Christianity, Dawson believed, "breaks down the close self-centered world of secularist culture and gives human society a new spiritual purpose which transcends the conflicting interests of individual and class and race."[63] The study of Christian culture, therefore, promised to inaugurate a new age in American Catholicism.

American Catholics responded to Dawson's challenge in several journal articles, frequently criticizing his approach and warning of the hostility of the modern state to Dawson's project. In the Jesuit *America* magazine, educator Helene Magaret noted that Dawson's proposals were "idealistic" and unworkable. She wrote: "If the Catholic liberal-arts college is to function in the American community, it must meet the educational demands of its secular milieu. This is not a matter of choice; it is one of survival." Secularists tolerated the "Catholic educational system" only because it agreed to meet their demands. Catholic educators, functioning in "intellectual market places" of American higher education, must "provide the student with the best possible Christian cultural background" while offering "all the materialistic trivia of the modern world" in order to meet the utilitarian demands of students.[64] In Fordham University's journal *Thought*, Herbert A. Musurillo attacked Dawson's program for its slighting of the classics and its impracticability. Like Magaret, Musurillo pointed to the problem of the state. He wrote: "And that the suggestions should come at a time when all religious groups are striving to promote civil tolerance among themselves and to elicit the attention of the State, strikes me as peculiarly unfortunate."[65] In other words, Catholics should keep their heads down and continue their current program in order to avoid the wrath of the state. Another Jesuit, Robert Harnett, who had worked in the 1930s on a course of studies using Newman's *Idea of a University*, lodged minor complaints with Dawson while agreeing with much of his analysis. He doubted the proposal would work given the hostility of the secularists. He wrote: "If those who control the policies of the National Educational Association would pay any serious attention to the proposal that contact be re-established with Christian culture, they would never have led us to where we are in the first place."[66] The critics indicated that Catholic higher education needed the approval of the state to be relevant in modern America. If the state would fight Catholic higher education, then why would students potentially damage their future careers by attending Catholic universities? In other words, these critics recognized the significant power of the

secular state over education and sought to accommodate this power in order to survive as a distinct group. Dawson would have to answer these critiques.

From 1955 through the publication of *The Crisis of Western Education* in 1961, Dawson published shorter pieces on education that broadened his proposal in order to answer the challenges put forth by his critics. He recognized that public education, directed by the modern secular state, would not disappear in the short run. Any proposal thus had to take into account the vast power of the state.[67] Dawson had initially directed his proposals on education to a Catholic audience but by 1957 had expanded his program to include public schools. He wrote in *Commonweal*:

> If we want to preserve Catholic education in a secularized society, we have got to do something about non-Catholic education also. The future of civilization depends on the fate of the majority, and, so long as nothing is done to counteract the present trend of modern education, the mind of the masses must become increasingly alienated from the whole tradition of Christian culture.

He noted that universities must educate future public school teachers in a Christian culture program so that they could pass on this knowledge to their young pupils. "Universities and other centers of higher education" needed to "take the first step." This would "by degrees affect the whole tone of public education."[68]

He linked this strategy to the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century, one of his favorite areas of study. The Oxford Movement demonstrated "what a university movement can do" by providing an "interesting example of the way in which a movement on the university level can change the climate of public opinion and bear religious and social fruit."[69] Dawson recognized that many of his Catholic critics were neoscholastics or classical humanists who fundamentally disagreed with a historical approach.[70] Several critics, including Musurillo, feared Dawson was a mere propagandist for the medieval world. Dawson rejected the suggestion that the

study of Christian culture "would have a narrowing and cramping effect on the mind of the student." Instead, "it is eminently a liberal and liberalizing study, since it shows us how to relate our own contemporary social experience to the wider perspectives of universal history."[71] Dawson's assurances seemed designed to assuage secularist fears as well. By portraying his program as non-aggressive, non-sectarian, and broad-minded, Dawson hoped to make it palatable to secularists. The historical character of the program separated it from the project of neoscholasticism, which secularists certainly opposed.

Dawson's *The Crisis of Western Education*, then, developed out of the years of discussion about his educational proposals. He incorporated the responses of his critics in the book, demonstrating his willingness to address the particular historical context of his American Catholic audience. The themes as well as many passages from his articles on education since 1946 appeared in *Crisis*.[72] The book began with a brief discussion of culture followed by a history of education in the West (chapters 1–5). Dawson devoted two chapters to education in the United States, one on secular trends, and one on Catholic education (chapters 6–7). Dawson believed that American Catholic culture had been heavily formed by the influence of the Irish upon the American Church as well as the broader cultural push for economic prosperity. He diagnosed secularism as the main problem facing modern society and criticized both the rise of the modern state and its attempts to use mass public education to spread its ideology (chapter 8). Dawson then elaborated on the study of Christian culture for four chapters (chapters 9–12). He stressed the need for students to understand the plausibility of Catholic culture. He noted the importance of a historical rather than philosophical approach to Christian education. He also indicated a few specifics about his program, outlining six eras of study from the Birth of Jesus to the modern age. Dawson made it clear that he was not advocating the exclusive study of the medieval period or calling for a Great Books program. He did advocate the use of the apparatus of the modern state to make innovations in public education, clearly consistent with his

conclusion in *The Judgement of the Nations* and his responses to the debates over education during the 1950s. Dawson insisted: "The only real solution is to change the cultural environment which has made it possible for this unnatural state of things to develop." It is only through "the medium of culture," he insisted, "that the Faith can penetrate civilization and transform the thought and ideology of modern society."[73] Dawson's *Crisis of Western Education* served as the solution he offered to the problems of the modern state that he had diagnosed thirty years before.

The cool reception from American Catholics to *Crisis* could have been predicted from the debates over education Dawson had witnessed in the 1950s, but the burgeoning postwar American conservative movement offered another possible clientele for Dawson's programs. Dawson rarely commented on practical politics or his current political positions in his writings. His critiques of the modern state and of liberalism, however, made him a natural ally of the emerging intellectual right. Russell Kirk, for example, greatly admired Dawson's work. Like American Catholics, however, the American right divided into different factions, depriving Dawson of enthusiastic allies in the conservative intellectual movement.[74]

During the 1950s, as historian George Nash has shown, the American right included three main groups: libertarians, traditionalists, and ex-communists. Concerns with protecting free markets, a limited state, and maximizing individual liberty consumed the libertarian wing of the movement. Libertarian writers like Ludwig von Mises and F. A. Hayek focused more on economic themes rather than educational schemes. The traditionalist wing, represented by men such as Russell Kirk, L. Brent Bozell, and Richard Weaver, advocated virtue as the primary political end. Educational concerns fit more naturally with this group. In addition, a number of Catholics, particularly refugees from Eastern Europe, added a religious element to this wing. But anticommunism and support for free markets consumed much of the discussion. This wing was not necessarily engaged in the movement of the Catholic Revival and thus moved in different intellectual circles with different

intellectual concerns. Finally, the ex-communists, especially Whitaker Chambers, supported winning the Cold War as the primary concern of the American regime. All three groups of right-wing intellectuals found cultural topics interesting, but none believed, as Dawson did, that the solution to the problem of modernity was a revival of Christian culture within the educational system.[75]

Educational concerns played a role in conservative thinking during the postwar period, but conservatives tended to focus more on the power of the state, free markets, and forging a political movement to reshape American politics. William F. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* (1951) famously warned of anti-Christian indoctrination at America's best universities. In Buckley's *National Review*, the major publishing organ of the postwar right, a number of writers engaged issues of education.[76] Free-market advocacy also unified many American conservatives. Given Dawson's hostility to laissez faire, as he expressed in *Beyond Politics*, these thinkers would not find much to celebrate in his political writings. The primary concern of the conservatives during the 1950s and 1960s was settling on an ideology that could unite the various wings of the American right. Frank Meyer's "fusion" of traditional and libertarian ideals, mixed with a vigorous support for fighting the Cold War, eventually held together the conservative intellectual movement.[77] By this time, however, Dawson had faded from view. He suffered a stroke in 1962 and retired from Harvard and public life. In addition, American conservatives engaged American Catholics in the 1960s on political issues and the social teaching of the Church rather than on practical matters of education.[78] Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, published a year after *The Crisis of Western Education*, became, according to George Nash, one of the most influential conservative books of the 1960s.[79] Dawson's works faded from memory.[80]

The debate over Christopher Dawson's proposals for education revealed how limited the influence of an intellectual public Christianity could be in the post-World War II world. Despite being one of the most distinguished intellectuals of the important Catholic Revival of the early twentieth century and having a

transatlantic reputation, Dawson failed to win many allies, and thus his efforts had little immediate effect. His "natural" constituencies, American Catholics and American conservatives, had fragmented into competing groups. Although many agreed that the power of the modern state posed a danger to both Christianity and Western civilization, they could not agree on a common solution to the problem. Dawson's solutions faced several obstacles in the United States. Many university professors were secularists who would have fought the inclusion of a program of Christian culture studies. His program, if implemented, would have required strong centralization of the public school system in order to coordinate the needed curricular revisions. The centralization of American public education was a hot topic in the early 1960s due to the nationwide struggle over desegregation and continues to draw impassioned commentary. In addition, Dawson's dismissal of "ghetto Catholicism" and his advice to engage the culture implied that there was one main culture in which to assimilate or engage. But in the United States, a culturally diverse place with enduring regional differences, assimilation or accommodation to the broader culture is a more complex task than Dawson recognized. Interestingly, the varied reaction to Dawson's educational proposals affirm his own trenchant analysis of the power of secularism through the arm of the modern state to shape a common mind hostile to Christianity. Catholic educators seemed to fear the state's power over the culture and thus met the demands of the secular educational establishment in order to make their institutions relevant to secular culture. Dawson's analysis of the modern state, then, rather than his educational solutions, proved to be his most prescient political writing.

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Franciscan University of Steubenville, who introduced me to Dawson's works in 1992.

Endnotes

1. Christopher Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 1989), 102, 107, 187.
2. Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 105–123, especially 119; William M. Halsey, *The Survival of American Innocence: Catholicism in an Era of Disillusionment, 1920–1940* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 2; Arnold Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem: The Catholic Literary Revival and the Cultural Transformation of American Catholicism, 1920–1960* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), 4–16; and Bradley J. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World: The Augustinian Life and Mind of Christopher Dawson* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 2007). Birzer places Dawson in several intellectual contexts, including that of the Catholic Revival.
3. Christopher Dawson, "General Introduction," in *Essays in Order*, eds. Christopher Dawson and J. P. Burns (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), xix.
4. For the details of Dawson's life see Christina Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992). An excellent essay that helps to set the English context for Dawson's career is Aidan Nichols, "Christopher Dawson's Catholic Setting," in *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History*, eds. Stratford Caldecott and John Morrill (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 25–49. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 120–121.
5. Dawson, "General Introduction," in *Essays in Order*, vi, viii-ix.
6. Ibid., xi.
7. Ibid., xvi.
8. Ibid., vi–vii.
9. Dawson, "Christianity and the New Order," in *Essays in Order*, 243, emphasis in the original. See also E. J. Oliver, "The Religion of Christopher Dawson," *Chesterton Review* 9 (1983): 161–165.
10. Dawson, "General Introduction," in *Essays in Order*, xii.
11. Dawson, "Humanism and the New Order," in *Essays in Order*, 162.
12. Dawson, "General Introduction," in *Essays in Order*, vi.
13. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 123–143. The information about the title is on page 137.

14. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1936), xii–xiii. See Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 122–127.
15. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State,* 43–44. Dawson's comments on fascism led to continued misunderstanding of his position. Some charged that he was soft on fascism. See Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 125–127. Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 258–259. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 142–146.
16. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State,* xv.
17. Ibid., 47, 46.
18. Ibid., 55, 46.
19. Ibid., 55–57.
20. Ibid., 49.
21. Ibid., 107, 125.
22. Ibid., xv, xxi.
23. Ibid., 120. See Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 28, 152, on Dawson's differences with Belloc.
24. Christopher Dawson, *Beyond Politics* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 40–41. See Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 131–133.
25. Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, 47, 48.
26. Ibid., 74–76.
27. Ibid., 56.
28. Ibid., 101.
29. Ibid., 84. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 193–204.
30. Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, 91–92.
31. Ibid., 112–113.
32. Ibid., 115.
33. Christopher Dawson, *The Judgement of the Nations* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1943), foreword (no page number). See Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 147–151. See Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 197–198, 206.
34. Dawson, *Judgement of the Nations*, 3, 6, 10, 14, 16.
35. Ibid., 48–49.
36. Ibid., 67, 152.
37. Ibid., 83–84.
38. Ibid., 127.
39. Ibid., 133.
40. Ibid., 133–137. See Birzer, *Sanctifying the World,* 214.
41. See Allitt, *Catholic Converts*, 270. See also Dawson's comments on the United States, some of which he repeated in *The Crisis of Western*

Education, and in his 1960 lecture "America and the Secularization of Modern Culture" (Houston, TX: University of Saint Thomas, 1960).

42. See John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 127–188. Halsey, *The Survival of American Innocence*, 1–19. Douglas J. Slawson, *The Department of Education Battle, 1918–1932: Public Schools, Catholic Schools, and the Social Order* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), xii–xvi, 1–45. Arnold Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem*, 4–16.
43. Slawson, *The Department of Education Battle, 1918–1932*, xii–xvi, 1–45.
44. On this point, see Jay Corrin, *Catholic Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democracy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 170–173.
45. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 167, 179–180.
46. Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, 245. Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem*, xi–xvi. Slawson, *The Department of Education Battle, 1918–1932*, xiv, xvi.
47. Arnold Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem*, xi–xvi, 102–121. Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, 146–163, quotation on 148.
48. Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, 163, 246–260. One book-length contribution to this dialogue, which leaned on Dawson's theory of culture heavily, was Leo R. Ward, *Blueprint for a Catholic University* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1949). Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem*, 99–121. For a readable treatment of the Great Books movement, see Alex Beam, *A Great Idea at the Time: The Rise, Fall, and Curious Afterlife of the Great Books* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).
49. One of the most perceptive essays on Dawson's views and how they relate to modern education and intellectual trends is Russell Hittinger, "Christopher Dawson: A View from the Social Sciences," in *The Catholic Writer*, ed. Ralph McInerny (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1991), 31–47. See also Philip Gleason, "Christopher Dawson and the Study of Christian Culture," *Chesterton Review* 9 (1983): 167–171; Bruno Schlesinger, "Responses to Dawson's Ideas in the United States," *Chesterton Review* 9 (1983): 171–176; R. V. Young, "The Continuing Crisis," in *The Crisis of Western Education* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 1989), ix–xxiii; Christina Scott, "The Vision and Legacy of Christopher Dawson," in *Eternity in Time*, 20–22; and Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 215–243.
50. Dawson, "Education and the Crisis of Christian Culture," *Lumen Vitae* 1 (1946): 214. Gleason notes that this article was reprinted in pamphlet form in Chicago in 1949. See Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, 255, 395.

51. Dawson, "Education and the Crisis of Christian Culture," 205.
52. Joseph Varacalli, *The Catholic Experience in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 33. Varacalli uses the phrase "plausibility structure."
53. Dawson, "Education and the Crisis of Christian Culture," 206–208.
54. Ibid., 209–211.
55. Dawson, "The Study of Christian Culture as a Means of Education," *Lumen Vitae* 5 (1950): 172–173.
56. Ibid., 181, 174.
57. Ibid., 183–184.
58. Dawson, *Understanding Europe* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 195, 202, 203, 206. See Birzer, *Sanctifying the World*, 225.
59. Dawson, "Education and the Study of Christian Culture," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 42 (1953): 293, 297.
60. Ibid., 299–302.
61. Dawson, "Education and Christian Culture," *Commonweal* 59, no. 9 (December 4, 1953): 219. The theme of escaping the cultural ghetto was important to Catholics in the context of secular and Protestant attacks on Catholicism. The most famous expression of this during the time was John Tracy Ellis, "American Catholics and the Intellectual Life," *Thought* (1955): 351–388. An excellent treatment of Ellis's talk as well as the broader context of this question can be found in Patrick J. Hayes, *A Catholic Brain Trust: The History of the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs, 1945–1965* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), chapter 5.
62. Dawson, "Education and Christian Culture," 219.
63. Dawson, "Future of Christian Culture," *Commonweal* 59, no. 24 (March 19, 1954): 597–598.
64. Helene Magaret, "Barriers to the Organic Curriculum," *America* 91, no. 23 (September 4, 1954): 542, 544. Dawson addressed this point again in *Crisis of Western Education*, 152–153.
65. Herbert A. Musurillo, "Dawson's Program," *Thought: Fordham University Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1955): 186. Dawson's responses to Musurillo can be found in "The Study of Christian Culture in the American College," *Catholic World* 173 (1956): 197–201; and Musurillo, "Correspondence: Mr. Dawson Replies to Father Musurillo," *Thought* 31 (1956–1957): 159–160. Dawson addressed this point again in *Crisis of Western Education*, 155.
66. Robert Harnett, "The Dawson Challenge: A Discussion," *America* 93, no. 3 (April 16, 1955): 76.

67. Dawson, "Problems of Christian Culture," *Commonweal* 62, no. 2 (April 15, 1955): 34–36. In a 1952 book review Dawson noted that "orthodox Christianity has always recognized the authority of the state as a power ordained by God to which the Christian owed obedience and service." Dawson, "The Problem of Christ and Culture," *Dublin Review* 226 (1952): 66.
68. Dawson, "Education and the State," *Commonweal* 65, no. 17 (January 25, 1957): 426–427.
69. Dawson, "Problems of Christian Culture," 36. On Dawson's views of the Oxford Movement, see Peter Nockles, "Introduction" to Christopher Dawson, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: And Newman's Place in History* (London: Saint Austin Press, 2001), xv–xxxiv; and Marvin R. O'Connell, "Dawson and the Oxford Movement," *Chesterton Review* 9 (1983): 149–160.
70. James Hitchcock, "Postmortem on a Rebirth: The Catholic Intellectual Renaissance," *American Scholar* (Spring 1980): 220–222.
71. Dawson, "The Study of Christian Culture in the American College," *Catholic World* 182 (1956): 200.
72. For other articles not discussed previously that contributed ideas and passages to *Crisis*, see Dawson, "Universities Ancient and Modern," *Catholic Educational Review* 56 (1957): 27–31; and Dawson, "American Education and Christian Culture," *The American Benedictine Review* 9 (1958): 7–16.
73. Christopher Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education*, 173, 178. See also Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 195–197.
74. A good summary of the fragmented nature of American Catholics and American conservatives in the 1950s is Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950–1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), chapters 1–3. Kirk wrote an introduction to the 1992 edition of Christina Scott's biography of her father, *A Historian and His World.* Birzer frequently compares Kirk's and Dawson's ideas. For one example, see *Sanctifying the World*, 67–69. For Kirk's acknowledgement of Dawson's influence, see Birzer, 9.
75. George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998), 118. The summary of the three positions comes from Nash's book. Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America*, 60–77.
76. See Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, 136, 144. For a good contrast of one important conservative's thought with Dawson's, see two of Willmore Kendall's essays on education from the same period:

"The Function of a University" (1957) and "Who Should Control Our Public Schools?" (1958) in *Willmore Kendall Contra Mundum*, ed. Nellie D. Kendall (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1971), 537–553.

77. See Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, 141–171.
78. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, 292–293. Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America*, 83–120.
79. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, 268.
80. Allitt, *Catholic Converts*, 271–272. Reviews of Dawson's *Crisis of Western Education*, some positive, others negative, include Leo R. Ward, Review of *The Crisis of Western Education* in *The Review of Politics*, 23 (October 1961): 531–534; N. R. Tempest, "Review of *The Crisis of Western Education*," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 10 (May 1962): 206–207; Arnold Toynbee, "Review of *The Crisis of Western Education*," *International Affairs* 38 (July 1962): 378; and Justus George Lawler, "Review of *The Crisis of Western Education*," *Harvard Educational Review* 32 (Spring 1962): 214–220. See also the obituary for Dawson by some of his former colleagues at Harvard. Daniel Callahan, Mildred Horton, Francis Rogers, Bernard Swain, and George H. Williams, "Christopher Dawson: 12 October 1889–25 May 1970," *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (April 1973): 161–176.

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Dawson and Communism: How Much Did He Get Right?

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As recent scholarship has shown, Christopher Dawson wrote much about communism and Nazism, two forces he regarded as grave threats to Western Civilization.[1] Dawson lived to see the end of the fascist specter and had the chance, if he wished to take it, to assess the validity of his theories on Nazism. Indeed, large amounts of captured German documents were available to scholars almost at once following the end of the Second World War.[2] However, Dawson died when the Soviet Union was still a superpower, and Communist archives were largely closed to historians not loyal to the various regimes that controlled them.[3] While the West was not completely ignorant of conditions inside the Soviet empire, Dawson left the world stage without having had the ability to test his hypotheses on communism in a systematic way.[4] Though unfortunately not all archival materials from 1917–1991 have been released, the vast amount of information acquired since the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Soviet Union has placed us in a position to make certain judgments on the accuracy of Dawson's contentions and predictions about communism.[5]

During his career as a historian, Dawson approached Marxism-Leninism from a number of different perspectives.[6] Assessing the veracity of each of Dawson's claims in this wide area is beyond the scope of this article. There are, however, several themes in Dawson's scholarship that lend themselves particularly well to analysis employing the recently released archival documents. These include Dawson's belief in the absolute conflict between Christianity and communism, his thoughts on unity in the Western

and communist worlds, and his prescription for how responsible citizens ought to respond to the totalitarian menace.[7]

An inquiry into the evidence indicates that Dawson certainly did not have a perfect record in his quest to understand Marxism-Leninism. For example, Dawson averred that

> Totalitarianism, at least in its Communist form, is a united force, while the forces of justice are weak and divided. We must face the fact that we have failed to put across the ideology of Natural Law which is the only possible basis of unity, whereas the totalitarians, both Communist and Fascist, have been the masters of all the arts of propaganda and psychological warfare.[8]

In *The Gods of Revolution*, published posthumously, Dawson made a similar claim: "[T]he communist world … forms a single totalitarian power system and it also forms a united area for technological and industrial planning. The western world, on the other hand, is essentially pluralist and multiform in political power, in ideology, and in industrial and technological planning."[9] Undoubtedly, there were instances of disunity among both noncommunist and anticommunist countries.[10] However, the period of the Cold War also witnessed the formation of a number of important military and economic agreements and alliances between and among Western and noncommunist countries.[11] Moreover, far from being completely unified, the various communist states had at times far more serious divisions among each other than anything seen among Western nations.[12]

However, in his treatment of communism and religion Dawson has been substantially vindicated by the historical record. This article will focus on that relationship and Dawson's analysis of it. Among other reasons, this is appropriate because Dawson concentrated more of his efforts on the interplay between Marxism-Leninism and Christianity than on any other single aspect of the communist phenomenon.

Christianity and Communism

For Dawson, Christianity and communism were antithetical.[13] This concept, and its related issues, is perhaps the most prominent strand in Dawson's writings on Marxism-Leninism and the world situation.[14] According to him, communism "demand[ed] everything—absolute loyalty, absolute obedience to the state and the utter subordination of the individual to the community."[15] The ascendancy of communism in a country constituted a grave threat to Christianity and Dawson worried that the faith in such lands would not weather a century of communist indoctrination.[16] From the vantage point of current historical knowledge, this is the area where Dawson got the most right in his investigation of communism.

In 1935, Dawson offered a central statement of his views on Christianity and Marxism-Leninism in *Religion and the Modern State*. This book expanded on articles that Dawson had published the previous year on the topic.[17] Dawson began his treatment with the qualification that a believer may still possess spiritual freedom even if he is denied economic and political freedom: "[T]here is no fundamental reason why the passing of parliamentary democracy and economic individualism should be opposed to Christian principles.... It is at least theoretically possible that the limitation of political and economic freedom by the extension of social control should be actually favourable to the cause of spiritual freedom."[18] In the abstract, therefore, Lenin's curtailment of political and private property rights in the Soviet Union did not necessarily challenge Christianity.[19]

Nevertheless, Dawson made the following overall judgment of communism:

> Consequently it is in Communism that the latent opposition between the new state and the Christian religion attains its full realization in the social consciousness of our age. For the first time in the world's history the Kingdom of Antichrist has acquired political form and social substance and stands over against the Christian Church as

> a *counter-church* with its own dogmas and its own moral standards, ruled by a centralized hierarchy and inspired by an intense will to world conquest.[20]

Dawson did not reach this conclusion because of any particularly anti-religious statement by Marx or Lenin, although such statements undoubtedly existed and were known before the collapse of the Soviet Union.[21] In fact, Dawson contended that, to Marx, Catholicism was a dying force that did not possess the vitality to seriously compete with communism. "The real enemy in Marx's eyes was not Catholicism or Christianity, but the power that had, so Marx believed, already dethroned God and set up a purely secular culture and new secular standards of value—the power of Capitalism."[22] However, even if Marx did not identify the coming rivalry, Dawson saw the contest between Christianity and communism as hugely important:

> The conflict between Christianity and Marxism—between the Catholic Church and the Communist Party—is the vital issue of our time. It is not a conflict of rival economic systems like the conflict between Socialism and Capitalism, or of rival political ideals—as with Parliamentarianism and Fascism. It is a conflict of rival philosophies and of rival doctrines regarding the very nature of man and society.[23]

For Dawson, the battleground of the twentieth century included not only the forces of Christianity and communism but also those of capitalism. Dawson stressed that a natural alliance did not exist between Catholicism and capitalism: "It is not a straight fight between communism and Catholicism or between communism and capitalism. It is a fight of each against all."[24] However, while both communism and Christianity took issue with pure capitalism, the chasm that existed between the two ideologies was precisely illustrated in their respective critiques: "Marxism condemns in Liberalism just the element that we can approve, namely, its partial acceptance of Christian moral standards; and it

approves just what we condemn, that is to say, the secularization of life and the entire subordination of man to economic ends."[25]

If Marx did not regard Christianity as a significant rival, whence the total conflict between Catholicism and communism? Dawson's answer was two-fold. The first reason had to do with Christianity's role as an impediment to the realization of Marxism-Leninism's designs. In Dawson's understanding, the "vital issue" of communism was "the subordination of man, body and soul, to the economic machine of the secular State."[26] To illustrate this point, Dawson pointed to the rural terror that took place in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and early 1930s, where we now know as many as fourteen million peasants died from state-enforced dekulakization and the artificial famine that accompanied the collectivization campaign.[27] Dawson averred that "the greatest obstacle to the fulfillment of [Communism's] end is not Capitalism, nor the bourgeois culture, but the Christian faith."[28]

The second reason for the clash was found in the makeup of Marxism-Leninism. Dawson argued that Soviet communism, while vigorously atheistic, shared important characteristics with religion:

> Its attitude to the Marxian doctrines is not the attitude of an economist or an historian towards a scientific theory; it is the attitude of a believer to the gospel of salvation; Lenin is more than a political hero, he is the canonized saint of Communism with a highly developed cultus of his own; and the Communist ethic is religious in its absoluteness and its unlimited claims to the spiritual allegiance of its followers.[29]

Consequently, Marxism-Leninism could not tolerate Christianity because, with its sweeping universalism and declarations of historical inevitability, it could not tolerate any rival faiths.[30] In 1956, Dawson went so far as to submit that communism had "a creed and a dogma … an ideology and a social philosophy, and a code of ethics and moral values. [It forms] a secular church, a community of believers with its own very highly organized hierarchy of institutions

and authorities." Its "opposition to Christianity is clear, consistent and complete."[31]

What was the nature of communism's threat to Christianity? Dawson presented it as follows:

> The great danger that we have to meet is not the danger of violent persecution but rather that of the crushing out of religion from modern life by the sheer weight of a State-inspired public opinion and by the mass organisation of society on a purely secular basis. Such a state of things has never occurred before because the State has never been powerful enough to control every side of social life. It has been a State with limited functions, not a Totalitarian State. Moreover, in the past, public opinion recognised the validity of the religious category and the autonomy of the religious life, even when it opposed and persecuted particular forms of religion. Today the conflict is a deeper and a wider one. It goes to the very roots of life and affects every aspect of human thought and action. One might even say that the very existence of religion itself is at stake.[32]

While in this passage Dawson rejected the idea that Catholics would suffer violent persecution in totalitarian lands, elsewhere he acknowledged that if a state pursued a plan of complete and fanatical secularism and went so far as to wage war on Christianity, the sole viable solution for the faithful would be to retreat to the catacombs.[33] It should be noted that while Dawson frequently devoted his scholarly attention to the particular phenomenon of communism, he included it in the general category of totalitarianism.[34] In a 1933 letter to the *Cambridge Review*, Dawson contended that "every moral or religious element that may conflict with the realization of this aim is ruthlessly eliminated … such a system [totalitarianism] is irreconcilable with religion in general and with Christianity in particular."[35] In sum, Dawson believed that communism, like the other strands of totalitarianism, aimed at the absolute destruction of Christianity.[36]

The Fate of Christianity in the Communist World

The historical record indicates that Dawson was quite correct in his judgment that communism was inimical to the Christian faith.[37] Indeed, if anything, Dawson understated the matter.[38] Not only did Communist leaders advance atheistic and anti-religious theories, but the history of communism in practice is replete with examples of the government actively persecuting Christians.[39] This reality is perhaps best illustrated by a survey of the Communist Party's policies toward religion in the Soviet Union, which had the longest history of Marxism-Leninism of the countries that have substantially released archival materials.[40]

The Communist regime showed its animosity toward Christianity virtually from its outset.[41] Unlike other aspects of Lenin's life,[42] his disdain for, even hatred of, religion was not hidden by Communist officials:

> Every religious idea, every idea of God, even flirting with the idea of God, is unutterable vileness … vileness of the most dangerous kind, "contagion" of the most abominable kind. Millions of sins, filthy deeds, acts of violence and *physical* contagions … are far less dangerous than the *subtle*, spiritual idea of a God decked out in the smartest "ideological" costumes.… *Every* defence or justification of the idea of God, even the most refined, the best intentioned, is a justification of reaction.[43]

Such an anti-religious outlook was shared by other prominent Bolsheviks.[44] For example, Emelian Iaroslavskii, with whom Trotsky apparently agreed, averred that religion was merely ignoble superstition utilized by the dominant class.[45] Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharskii, who perhaps had a more nuanced understanding of religion than other atheists, nevertheless claimed: "Here one needs pliers. Religion must be grabbed, squeezed from below: you do not beat it, but pull it out, pull it with its roots. And this can be achieved only by scientific propaganda, by the moral and artistic education of the masses."[46]

Though for tactical reasons the Bolsheviks waited until 1922 to commence a full-scale attack upon religion, already in 1917–1918 the Communist government published decrees that formally separated church and state, took all schools, including seminaries, away from religious authorities, subjected all church property and lands to nationalization, and effectively abolished the legal rights of religious bodies to protest assaults upon them.[47] At the same time, the regime also refused to recognize the legitimacy of baptisms, marriages, and divorces carried out by the Russian Orthodox Church.[48] The November 1917 Declaration on the Rights of the Peoples of Russia, from the Communist Party, nominally did away with all religious privileges.[49] In 1919, Communist leaders ordered that those younger than eighteen could no longer receive religious education.[50] The government also directed that atheism classes be taught to all students, from kindergarteners to those in college.[51]

On December 4, 1920, the head of the Cheka's Secret Department, T. P. Samsonov, communicated the following in a top-secret letter to Cheka (predecessor to the KGB) chairman Feliks Dzerzhinskii:

> Communism and Religion are mutually exclusive and … no other apparatus is capable of destroying religion apart from the apparatus of the [Cheka].… Up till now the [Cheka] has concerned itself only with the destruction of the orthodox church as the largest and most powerful, but this is not enough as there are on the territory of the Republic a whole range more of no less powerful Religions, like Islam etc., where we also have to bring the same destruction step by step that was brought to the orthodox church.… The work of dispelling the religious darkness is extremely difficult and great and for this reason one must not rely on speedy success.[52]

On the whole during the early Russian Revolution, rather than harassing individual believers, the Soviet government placed its emphasis on legally dividing church and state, undercutting the

institutional structure of churches and weakening the economic foundation of the various churches.[53]

Nevertheless, there is evidence of violence and hostility against religious groups and clergy members from 1917 to 1921.[54] Indeed, as early as December 30, 1918, Metropolitan Platon of Odessa reported to Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, that orthodox clergy members had undergone ordeals "before which the persecutions of the Christians in the first three centuries … pale."[55] The Communists admitted that, between February and May 1918, 687 believers died while taking part in religious processions or trying to defend church properties.[56] In 1919, for example, the Communist authorities arrested and eventually deported Archbishop de Ropp, leader of the Catholic Church in Russia.[57] During the Civil War (1918–1920), most of the higher clergy in the Russian Orthodox Church openly allied themselves with the anti-Bolshevik White armies. During the course of the war, the Communists arrested and executed many clergy.[58] From 1918 to 1919, the Bolsheviks sacked and closed most of the monasteries and cloisters in the areas they controlled.[59]

The regime's all-out assault upon Christianity began in earnest in March 1922. In 1921, a terrible famine hit Russia and the Ukraine.[60] Substantially caused by Communist policies toward agriculture, the famine affected as many as 33.5 million people. Between 1920 and 1922, approximately 5.1 million people in the Soviet Union died from starvation and attendant diseases.[61] In the face of such horror, Lenin in fact viewed the famine as an opportunity to wage a more effective war against Christianity.

In 1921, Patriarch Tikhon of the Russian Orthodox Church offered to donate non-consecrated church items to be used for famine relief. He did not include consecrated vessels in his proposal. Tikhon's reasoning had nothing to do with monetary considerations because the non-consecrated vessels were mostly made of valuable metals but was instead grounded in the fact that Russian orthodoxy deemed the employment of consecrated items for secular ends a sacrilege. For political, not humanitarian, reasons, Lenin paid no attention to the Tikhon's offer. Instead,

Lenin attempted to compel the Church into an untenable position in which it would look both uncharitable and defiant toward Soviet authority by demanding that the Church give up consecrated items for famine relief—something about which Lenin knew Tikhon could not comply. In reality, Lenin and the Communist leadership cared not about the plight of the starving peasants but rather about the chance to finally crush the Russian Orthodox Church.[62]

Acting preemptively, Tikhon offered to pay the amount equivalent to the consecrated vessels' value but was refused by Bolshevik officials.[63] In February 1922, the regime ordered the confiscation of all church treasure, including sacramental vessels.[64]

In multiple locations, believers put up determined resistance.[65] Press accounts from the time point to approximately 1,400 violent confrontations.[66] Following one particularly bloody clash between Christian faithful and Red Army troops in Shuia in March 1922, the Politburo, with Lenin absent, decided to postpone further seizures. Voiding the resolution in a top-secret letter, Lenin wrote the following:

> I think that here our enemy is committing an enormous strategic mistake in trying to drag us into a decisive battle at a time when it is … particularly disadvantageous for him. … [F]or us this moment is not only exceptionally favorable but generally the only moment when we can, with ninety-nine out of a hundred chances of total success, smash the enemy and secure for ourselves an indispensable position for many decades to come. It is precisely now and only now, when in the starving regions people are eating human flesh, and hundreds if not thousands of corpses are littering the roads, that we can (and therefore must) carry out the confiscation of church valuables with the most savage and merciless energy, not stopping [short of] crushing any resistance.[67]

As to the specific incident in Shuia, Lenin added that "the trial of the Shuia rebels resisting aid to the hungry [i.e., those defending

the Church] [will] be conducted with the maximum of speed and [will] end in execution by firing squad of a very large number … and to the extent possible … also in Moscow and several other clerical centers."[68]

The following day, March 20, the Politburo adopted an appropriate protocol to match Lenin's directions. It resolved to form secret steering commissions that would be charged with the seizure of church valuables. In the most significant regions, such confiscations were to take place in the shortest periods of time. The Politburo was determined to cover the regime's actions in the cloak of acting for the famine victims: "Everywhere it is possible, in churches, at meetings, in barracks, etc. present representatives of the starving demanding the speedy confiscation of valuables." As for clergy members, the Communist leadership advised: "Try not to touch prominent priests until the end of the campaign, but secretly warn them officially … that in the case of any excesses they will be the first to answer for them."[69]

The trials against clergy and other believers that Lenin referred to in his letter commenced soon after the March 20 Politburo meeting. The regime arrested clergy members throughout the country.[70] Many of those detained were condemned to execution.[71] Show trials against clergy members were held in Moscow, Petrograd, Smolensk, Ivanovo, and Shuia.[72] On April 13, death sentences were handed down to three Shuia defendants.[73] On May 8, the Politburo voted 5–2 to let stand a Moscow court verdict sentencing eleven people, including some laity, to death.[74] From June 11 to July 5, 1922, 86 members of the Christian faithful were placed on trial in Petrograd.[75] Following the proceedings, the authorities secretly executed Metropolitan Benjamin and three co-defendants.[76] The regime sent 77 priests from Petrograd and 148 priests and laypeople from Moscow to prison camps.[77] In May 1922, Tikhon himself was placed under house arrest.[78]

Lynchings and arrests by the secret police constituted the bulk of the violence against the clergy during this time period.[79] Communicating to the Politburo, Dzerzhinskii expressed the opinion that "all priests resisting the confiscation of church goods

should be designated enemies of the people and exiled to one of the Volga regions most affected by the famine."[80] Leading churchmen were tortured and maimed before being killed. For example, Archbishop Andronik of Perm suffered the horror of having his cheeks hollowed, his eyes gashed, and his nose and ears severed. To magnify the humiliation, the Bolsheviks drove him around Perm before drowning Andronik in the river.[81] Russian Orthodox Church records indicate that the Communist authorities killed 2,691 priests, 3,447 nuns, and 1,962 monks in 1922 alone.[82] In 1925, Tikhon estimated that 100 bishops and 10,000 priests were in jail or in forced exile.[83] In the midst of such carnage, Lenin apparently wished to be updated daily about the number of priests put to death.[84]

The Russian Orthodox were not the only Christians to suffer at the hands of the Communist regime. In December 1922, the Bolsheviks shut down every Catholic church in Petrograd except one. The following March, the authorities brought the Catholic clergy to trial, where they were pronounced guilty of an assortment of crimes. The High Revolutionary Tribunal condemned to death Bishop Cieplak and his assistant, Monsignor Budkiewicz. Thirteen other Catholic clergy members received various punishments, including imprisonment. While Cieplak's sentence was ultimately commuted to ten years confinement following international protests, the Soviet government consummated the rest of the court's orders.[85]

Lenin and his fellow Bolshevik leaders failed of course in their attempt to use the famine to totally annihilate Christianity in the Soviet Union.[86] However, any believers who thought that their lot might be substantially improved by Lenin's death in January 1924 would be quickly disabused of such notions. Indeed, a top-secret OGPU communication from the Ukraine issued a month after Lenin's death included the following persons as "Hidden Enemies of Sov[iet] Power:" "All servants of religious cults: hierarchs, [Orthodox] priests, [Catholic] priests, rabbis, deacons, church elders, precentors, monks etc.… All belonging to religious sects and communities (baptists are especially in mind)." The OGPU, a

successor to the Cheka, issued these instructions "[w]ith the aim of a universal settling of accounts, and [the establishment of] suitable surveillance … on politically unreliable and socially alien elements of the population."[87]

In 1925, the Communist authorities launched the League of the Militant Godless to advance their goal of atheism. The League's activities included protests, theatrical productions, "wall newspapers" in public areas, speeches, "godless corners," discussion "circles," "evenings," radio broadcasts, and lectures. In Moscow, the League's Central Council ran a principal anti-religious museum. Such museums were also seen in other parts of the country, sometimes set up by League councils in former houses of worship. At various times during the 1920s, churches were subject to vandalism by Komsomol activists.[88] By 1928, the regime had closed approximately 15,000 Russian Orthodox churches.[89]

Stalin's rise to power ushered in a new wave of particularly severe measures against Christians.[90] On April 8, 1929, the Soviet government issued "On Religious Associations," a decree that required religious groups consisting of twenty or more adults to register with, and to receive approval from, the regime prior to meeting. It also revoked the right to distribute propaganda of a religious nature while retaining the prohibition on religious education in state schools. In sum, the law made the spreading of the faith outside the home a criminal offense, except when done in government-approved classes.[91] The decree also provided that "any use of the religious prejudices of the masses … for destabilizing the state [was punishable] by anything from a minimum three-year sentence up to and including the death penalty."[92] In August 1929, the Communist authorities proscribed Sundays as days of worship and mandated that they be treated as normal workdays.[93]

In the years leading up to the Second World War, the closure of churches in the Soviet Union proceeded apace. As of April 1, 1936, only twenty-eight percent of pre-1917 Orthodox churches remained in use.[94] By 1941, this number dropped to roughly eight percent.[95] Government attempts to shut down churches frequently met vigorous local opposition. For example, according to a

top-secret communication by the OGPU, in August 1929 in the Dyatkovsky district, the following scene transpired:

> Department travelled to the site of the closure of the church with the CID agent and head of the departmental militia on the guard of the Dyatkovsky crystal factory. On arrival it was envisaged that the churchwarden would give them the keys of the church—the warden refused to hand over the keys and the priest of the church, by then called, appeared in a drunken state accompanied by hysterical women. As a result, a heated dispute arose around the handover of the church during which two of the crowd who arrived with the priest … climbed up the bell tower and sounded the alarm. At the alarm call people ran in from the fields with sickles and stakes, up to 300–350 women, who drove away the representatives who had come to close the church.[96]

Having already gone after the precious church vessels in 1922, the Communists also sought to remove church bells and use the metal for other purposes. A top-secret 1925 OGPU communication from the Ukraine explained the newest attack on Church property as follows:

> The defence of the Soviet state and the equipping of the Red army … demand a great quantity of non-ferrous metals.… In connection with this the government ordered and instructed the OGPU to collect the necessary information on the number and weight of church bells and other metal utensils of the churches.[97]

In the place of the true rationale for the confiscation of church bells, the government offered the spurious justification that "the sound of bells disturbs the right to peace of the vast majority of atheists in the towns and the countryside."[98] In October 1929, instructions were given for the commandeering of all church bells.

In 1930, almost fourteen percent of disturbances and peasant uprisings were triggered by bell removals or church closings.[99]

Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior, infamously blown up by the regime in December 1931, was thoroughly pillaged for all items of potential value to Soviet authorities before the final detonation. Any clergy who protested the sacking faced execution.[100] Not surprisingly, clergy strength suffered enormously under the Communist onslaught. Total registered priests fell from 112,629 in 1914 to 70,000 in 1928 to 17,857 in 1936.[101] Whereas the Mogilev Roman Catholc Archdiocese alone had 400 priests in 1921, by 1924 there remained only 116 active Catholic priests for all of the Soviet Union.[102]

Christians suffered as a result of their faith during Stalin's dekulakization and collectivization campaigns as well as his Great Terror.[103] In carrying out dekulakization, Soviet authorities killed, or sent to the far north with their families, millions of peasants. While in theory these were the so-called rich peasants, in reality they were most powerful and the most intractable to the Communists' plans.[104] In an OGPU order of February 1930 about the dekulakization drive, Genrikh Yagoda, then deputy chairman of the OGPU, said the following: "Above all the blow must be directed at the active kulak elements of the first category [including] Kulaks who are active members of church councils and all kinds of religious and sectarian communities and groups actively manifesting themselves." Those kulaks in the "first category" were to be "liquidat[ed]," not deported. Yagoda called for "the anti-Soviet active kulak group of church-people and sectarians" to be deported with their families "to the remote northern districts of the USSR" and to have their property seized.[105] Officially, the Communist Party considered the church to be "the kulak's agitprop."[106]

While the evidence is not totally clear on this point, it appears that at least 13,000 priests suffered the fate of dekulakization in 1930.[107] It is reported that, in 1931 near the closed Theological Seminary in Maryupil, 4,000 priests were incarcerated and forced to perform difficult manual tasks with woefully inadequate

nutrition. Priests died every day from such miserable conditions.[108] Dukulakization and the Great Terror did particular damage to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Between 1928 and 1938, thirteen of its archbishops and bishops died as Communist captives. Only two Ukrainian Orthodox bishops survived the Stalin era. Overall, 1,150 priests and approximately 20,000 believers serving on Ukrainian church councils, at the district or parish level, met their end in Soviet prison camps. Between 1934 and 1936, the regime laid waste to roughly seventy-five to eighty percent of the churches in the Ukraine not previously touched by the government. Such devastation left only two churches still in operation in 1935 in Kiev, which at one time had been home to hundreds of churches.[109]

During Stalin's Great Terror of the 1930s, the authorities invariably suspected Christian priests of having committed capital crimes, and trials of clergy were held throughout the country.[110] At one proceeding in Orel in 1937, the defendants were charged with, among other offenses, "publishing prayers in Old Slavonic." In February 1938, three bishops were convicted of "agitat[ing] for the opening of previously closed churches" and sabotage.[111] The evidence against Mikhail Yedlinsky, who was executed in late 1937 and even had his passport destroyed for good measure, included the following: "In 1931 he collected and passed on a range of material on the closures of monasteries in Ukraine. … He made use of the church for slanderous sermons directed against Soviet power."[112]

As with so many of Stalin's other victims, Christians targeted by the regime suffered through the horror of internment in the Gulag.[113] For example, in 1930, one group of religious believers, who out of principle refused utterly to cooperate with the Communist authorities, were incarcerated in a prison camp at Solovetsky. Because they would not deal with Soviet money or passports, coming as the materials did from what they regarded to be the "Anti-Christ," the camp officials exiled the Christians to a deserted island. The guards informed the believers that they would not receive rations until they signed for them. The faithful rebuffed and within two months all had died from starvation. An eyewitness

recalled that the next mission to the island "found only corpses which had been picked by the birds."[114]

Following the Politburo's July 2, 1937 telegram on Anti-Soviet Elements, which instructed the NKVD at once to arrest and execute or exile enemies of the government, the NKVD issued Operational Prikaz 00447. This important directive included "Churchmen [and] members of sects" in its list of "former kulaks, criminals and other anti-Soviet elements" to be "repress[ed]." This Prikaz, and other such operational orders, targeted segments of the Soviet population simply for who they were or what they believed. Christians thus suffered for the fact of their faith, not because they had committed any particular crimes or political offenses. Prikaz 00447 provided the number of victims to be immediately shot or incarcerated in each administrative unit enumerated. Unfortunately, such figures regularly increased, frequently upon Stalin's instructions, over the next fifteen months. The Soviet leadership had legal tribunals provide the actual criminal charges after the victims had already been selected. Wives of the arrested were also to be punished.[115] One historian, on the basis of archival data, estimates that during the Stalin era the Communist regime killed approximately 700,000 Christian clergy and religious, mostly Russian Orthodox, because of their beliefs.[116]

Acknowledging that "the population won't fight for us Communists, but they will fight for Mother Russia," Stalin, among other measures, relaxed the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church somewhat during the Second World War.[117] At the close of hostilities, the Soviet people hoped that their tremendous sacrifices on behalf of the government would be rewarded with, at the very least, moderated behavior on the part of the Communist regime.[118] For the Christian faithful, the next forty years of Soviet history showed that such hopes were substantially misplaced.[119]

Although strongly linked with de-Stalinization, during the latter part of his reign Khrushchev in fact oversaw the worst attacks on Christianity, and religion in general, since the 1930s.[120] The campaign would not be formally launched until 1959, but as early as July 1954 a Central Committee resolution asserted that

"[r]eligious prejudices and superstitions undermine the consciousness of a part of the Soviet people and reduces their active participation in the building of communism."[121] Apparently, in Moscow in the summer of 1957, the Communist Party held a secret meeting where 350 activists and theorists conferred about religion's continuing influence in the Soviet Union and the party's failures in atheistic and anti-religious propaganda and education.[122]

Once again, the closing of churches figured prominently in the Communist authorities' battle against the Christian faith. Of 17,500 open Russian Orthodox churches in 1958, only 7,500 remained in 1966.[123] Armenian Orthodox worshipers saw sixteen of their forty-eight churches closed between 1958 and 1964.[124] Monasteries and convents were also targeted. As with the previous anti-religious initiatives of Lenin and Stalin, violence at times accompanied the execution of party policy. For example, a secret July 1959 report for the Central Committee described the following scene in connection with the attempt to close a monastery in Moldavia:

> The nuns of the monastery … announced to their relatives and acquaintances in the nearby villages that they were being oppressed, driven out of the monastery etc., and as a result of this many inhabitants from villages surrounding the monastery … organised in the monastery church a round-the-clock watch of 50 people armed with pitchforks, sticks and stones.… After the explanatory work was conducted, the majority of the population returned to their villages, but in the following days right up to 2 July groups of 20–25 people continued to remain in the monastery church, and they began to terrorise the representatives of power and society. They brutally beat up an agronomist … and bodily injuries were sustained by several other people. On 1 July militia lieutenant Dolgan suffered serious pitchfork wounds in a murder attempt by one of the organisers of the assault … and the lieutenant shot this bandit in self-defence. The organisers of the disorder and hooliganism—eleven in number—were arrested and an investigation is going on.

By way of a coda, the author of the memorandum added that "On 3 July it was reported from Moldavia that the Rechulsky monastery has been liquidated, the church closed and the incident brought to an end."[125]

The campaign against religion carried out during Khrushchev's leadership of the Communist Party took other forms as well.[126]

Editor's Note

The article manuscript leaves off at this point, left unfinished at the time of the author's death.

Endnotes

1. Adam Schwartz, "Confronting the 'Totalitarian Antichrist': Christopher Dawson and Totalitarianism," *The Catholic Historical Review* 89 (2003): 464–488.
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5. James G. Hershberg, "Report from Moscow: Soviet Archives: The Opening Door," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* ("*CWIHP Bulletin*") 1 (1992): 1; Jonathan Haslam, "Stalin's War or Peace: What If the Cold War Had Been Avoided?" in *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, ed. Niall Ferguson (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 350–352; and Donald J. Raleigh, "Doing Soviet History: The Impact of the Archival Revolution," *Russian Review* 61 (2002): 16.
6. See, e.g., Christopher Dawson, "Catholicism and Economics, Part III, the Economic Problem of the Present Age," *Blackfriars* 5 (1924): 210; "Catholicism and Class War: 'A Living Question for the Whole of Western Civilisation,'" *Sunday Referee*, May 24, 1931; "The Significance of Bolshevism," *The American Review* 1 (1933): 36; "What Is Russia?" *Changing World Series* 1 (n.d.): 3–6; "Religion and the Totalitarian State," *The Criterion* 14 (1934): 1; "The Yogi and the Commissar," *Blackfriars* 26 (1945): 366; "Christianity and the Orient: The Problem of Oriental Nationalism, II," *The Tablet* 208 (1956): 196; and "Karl Marx

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8. Christopher Dawson, "S.O.S.," *The Sword*, April 1946: 4.
9. Dawson, *Gods of Revolution*, 164.
10. See, e.g., Richard Pipes, *Survival Is Not Enough: Soviet Realties and America's Future* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 248–259; and Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).
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12. See, e.g., John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 189–220; Robert Conquest, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 163–164; *The Third Indochina War: Conflict between China, Vietnam and Cambodia, 1972–79*, eds. Odd Arne Westad and Sophie Quinn-Judge (London: Routledge, 2006); and Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). Documents on intra-Communist conflicts can be found in *The Prague Spring 1968*, ed. Jaromír Navrátil (New York: Central European University Press, 1998); *Brothers in*

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14. See, e.g., Christopher Dawson, "The Tragedy of Christian Politics," *The Sign* 18 (1938): 7; *Beyond Politics* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939), 61–92; "The Threat to the West," *Commonweal* 31 (1940): 317; "A Century of Change: 1840–1940," *The Tablet* 175 (1940): 470; and "Catholics in the Modern World: A Survey at Pentecost," *The Tablet* 195 (1950): 419–421.
15. Christopher Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis," in *Christianity and European Culture*, ed. Gerald J. Russello (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 69.
16. Ibid., 73; see Schwartz, "Dawson," 480.
17. Christopher Dawson, "Catholicism and the Totalitarian State," *Catholic Times*, May 11, 1934: 4; and "Religion and the Totalitarian State."
18. Dawson, *Modern State*, 51.
19. On the Soviet Union during Lenin's reign, see Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991); and *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).
20. Dawson, *Modern State*, 58.
21. See, e.g., Robert Conquest, *Religion in the U.S.S.R.* (New York: Praeger, 1968).
22. Dawson, *Modern State*, 59.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 61; see Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis," 71.
25. Dawson, *Modern State*, 65.
26. Ibid., 67.
27. A trailblazing account of these events is provided in Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Important archival materials

are presented in *The War against the Peasantry, 1927–1930: The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside*, ed. Lynne Viola (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005). The accuracy of Dawson's interpretation of Stalin's subjugation of the peasantry has been confirmed by released documents. In November 1932, Dnepropetrovsk party secretary Mikhail Khatayevich wrote to the Kremlin "that in order to ensure the state's production future, we must take into account the minimum needs of the *kolkhozniks* [Soviet agricultural workers], for otherwise there will be no one left to sow and ensure production.'" Molotov, Stalin's foreign minister, replied, "Your position is profoundly incorrect, unBolshevik. We Bolsheviks cannot put the needs of the state—needs precisely defined in party resolutions—in the tenth or even the second place." Robert Conquest, *The Dragons of Expectation: Reality and Delusion in the Course of History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 102.

28. Dawson, *Modern State*, 67.
29. Ibid., 58; see Christopher Dawson, "Christianity and Ideologies," *Commonweal* 64 (1956): 139. On the origins of the Lenin cult, see Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, 812–815.
30. Schwarz, "Dawson," 480.
31. Dawson, "Civilization in Crisis," 71.
32. Dawson, *Modern State*, 57.
33. Dawson, "Religion in an Age of Revolution," 551.
34. See, e.g., Dawson, "Catholicism and the Totalitarian State, 4; and "Civilization in Crisis," 71.
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41. Dennis J. Dunn, *The Catholic Church and Russia: Popes, Patriarchs, Tsars, and Commissars* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 72–101; Pipes, *Bolshevik Regime*, 337–368. For a review of recent scholarship on Church-State relations in the Soviet Union during this period, see I. D. Thatcher, "Communism and Religion in Early Bolshevik Russia: A Discussion of Work Published Since 1989," *European History Quarterly* 36 (2006): 586.
42. See, e.g., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive*, ed. Richard Pipes (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
43. Conquest, *Religion*, 7.
44. Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 22.
45. Pipes, *Bolshevik Regime*, 339.
46. Ibid., 338.
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51. Dunn, *Catholic Church and Russia*, 76.
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54. Paul Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43 (2004): 35, 40; see Davis, *Long Walk*, 3.
55. Charles M. Edmondson and R. Barry Levis, "Archbishop Randall Davidson, Russian Famine Relief, and the Fate of the Orthodox Clergy, 1917–1923," *Journal of Church and State* 40 (1998): 619, 622.
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57. Dunn, *Catholic Church and Russia*, 74–75.
58. Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, 25–26.
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60. See Nicholas Werth, "A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union," in *Black Book of Communism*, 108–131.
61. Pipes, *Bolshevik Regime*, 410–419.
62. Ibid., 347.
63. Ibid., 348; see Davis, *Long Walk*, 3.
64. Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, 26.
65. Husband, *Atheism and Society*, 56–57.
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67. Letter from Lenin to Molotov for Politburo Members, March 19, 1922, in *Unknown Lenin*, 152–153.
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69. Protocol of the Meeting of the Politburo of the CC ACP(B), March 20, 1922, in *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 27–28.
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71. *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 33.
72. Werth, "State against Its People," 126.
73. Pipes, *Bolshevik Regime*, 353.
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76. Ibid., 355; Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, 26.
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78. See Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, 26; Pipes, *Bolshevik Regime*, 360.
79. Pipes, *Bolshevik Regime*, 355.
80. Werth, "State against Its People," 126.

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82. Werth, "State against Its People," 126.
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88. Peris, *Storming the Heavens*.
89. Froese, "Forced Secularization," 41.
90. Dunn, *Catholic Church and Russia*, 88; *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 75; see also Dennis J. Dunn, Review of *The Religious Policy of the Stalinist State: A Case Study; The Central Standing Commission on Religious Questions, 1929–1938* by Arto Luukkanen & *Church under the Pressure of Stalinism: The Development of the Status and Activities of the Soviet Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church during 1944–1950* by Jouko Talonen, *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 1658; Conquest, *Reflections*, 97. For some information on religion in the daily life of Soviet citizens during this time period, see Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).
91. Husband, *Atheism and Society*, 66.
92. Werth, "State against Its People," 172.
93. Ibid.; Dunn, *Catholic Church and Russia*, 89.
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103. See Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, especially 199–213; and *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Invaluable archival documents on the Great Terror are presented in J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939*, trans. Benjamin Sher (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).
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106. Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 203.
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109. Ibid., 210–213.
110. Conquest, *Great Terror: A Reassessment*, 273; *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 112; see, e.g., Special Report of the Directorate of the USSR NKVD for Voronezh Region on the Unsatisfactory Conduct of the Report Campaign of the Rural Soviets, October 14, 1936, in Ibid., 106–108.
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112. Extract From Record No. 109 of the Meeting of the Troika of the Kiev Regional Directorate of the UkrSSR NKVD, November 13, 1937, in *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 114–15.
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114. Applebaum, *Gulag*, 305–306.
115. Conquest, *Great Terror: A Reassessment*, xiv–xv.
116. Dunn, *Catholic Church and Russia*, 89. According to Robert Conquest, perhaps the finest chronicler of Stalin's Soviet Union: "*The Great Terror* was only peripherally concerned with the total casualties of the Stalin epoch. But it reckoned the dead as no fewer than twenty million. This figure is now given in the USSR. And the general total

of 'repressed' is now stated (e.g., in the new high-school textbooks) as around forty million, about half of them in the peasant terror of 1929 to 1933 and the other half from 1937 to 1953." Conquest, *Great Terror: A Reassessment*, 486; see Walter Laqueur, *The Dream That Failed: Reflections on the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 131–46; *Black Book of Communism*.

117. Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy; A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 288; see Conquest, *Great Terror: A Reassessment*, 457; Steven Merritt Miner, *Stalin's Holy War: Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, *2003*); see, e.g., "Stalin and the Orthodox Church," in *A Documentary History of Communism in Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev*, ed. Robert V. Daniels (London: University Press of New England, 1993), 228–229.
118. See Robert Conquest, "The Stalin Era," in *The Collapse of Communism*, ed. Lee Edwards (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 67.
119. Dunn, *Catholic Church and Russia*; Steven Merritt Miner, *Stalin's Holy War: Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941–1945*; Froese, "Forced Secularization," 154; see Greeley, "Religious Revival;" Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 199–200; and John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
120. Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics*, 6; *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 184; Andrew B. Stone, "'Overcoming Peasant Backwardness': The Khrushchev Antireligious Campaign and the Rural Soviet Union," *Russian Review* 67 (2008): 296.
121. Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics*, 11.
122. Davies, *Long Walk to Church*, 34.
123. Froese, "Forced Secularization," 42.
124. Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics*, 55.
125. Karpov to the CPSU CC, July 6, 1959, in *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 207–208.
126. William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 512.

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Christopher Dawson and Political Religion

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When religion was expelled from their souls, the effect was not to create a vacuum or a state of apathy; it was promptly, if but momentarily, replaced by a host of new loyalties and secular ideals that not only filled the void but (to begin with) fired the popular imagination.

—Alexis de Tocqueville on the French Revolution (1856)[1]

World politics shifted dramatically around the time of the Great War. A. J. P. Taylor opened his book *English History: 1914–1945* with these words: "Until August 1914 a sensible, law-abiding Englishman could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state, beyond the post office and the policeman."[2] English people did not need passports to travel abroad; they paid modest taxes. The state largely left the adult citizen alone. During and soon after the Great War, this minimal relationship between citizens and their states changed. Government took on a larger scope of activity in Britain, creating new departments of shipping, labor, food, national service, and food production. Some people understood that this was a direct result of the war.[3] Drafts forced citizens to serve the state; new regulations appeared for food, the press, and beer; and even the clocks changed with the first implementation of Daylight Savings Time.[4]

After the Great War, the politicization of life increased rapidly. In America and Britain the welfare state grew out of the New Deal (1933–1936) and the Beveridge Report (1942). On the Eurasian continent the changes were more dramatic. The collapse of the

German, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires after the Great War left a power vacuum in which totalitarian political movements were born. Dictatorship arose in Turkey, and communism spread to China in 1921 and took over that country in 1949. All of these movements embraced social planning and an expanded role for the state.

Christopher Dawson (1889–1970), the British historian of culture and social thinker, called these developments the "expansion of Politics."[5] Critical observers of the time struggled to develop concepts describing this expansion of politics. Were Russia after 1917, Italy after 1922, and Germany after 1933 dictatorships? Tyrannies? Autocracies? These regimes were perceived as something new that traditional vocabulary could not adequately describe. New concepts were needed because these regimes sought to control human lives in unprecedented ways. Two major new concepts that arose in the 1920s and 1930s to compare modern despotisms were "totalitarianism" and "political religion."[6] Dawson employed these concepts and they have been used by scholars ever since to try to understand the historical significance of the political movements of the early twentieth century.

The term "totalitarian" originated in 1923 among Italian antifascist opposition, including liberals, Catholics, and socialists.[7] It was adopted by fascists themselves. Benito Mussolini described totalitarianism as the all-embracing state: "The Fascist conception of the state is all embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism is totalitarian, and the Fascist state—a synthesis and a unit inclusive of all values—interprets, develops, and potentiates the whole life of a people."[8] The concept of political religion describes Mussolini's idea that the state is the source of all spiritual values. Political religion is a description of the functional place of an all-embracing political ideology that sacralizes entities such as nation, state, race, or class. Even though fascism, Nazism, and communism presented themselves as secular, advocates of the concept of political religion argue that they *functioned* as religions. The totalitarian regimes were animated by political religions, the spirits behind the

totalitarian machinery.[9] In addition to the phrase "political religions," Dawson used "pseudo-religion[s]," "public religions," and "secular religions"[10] almost synonymously. While Dawson's views on totalitarianism have already been studied,[11] his use of the concept political religion has not.

Dawson explained the expansion of politics in terms of political religion because he thought it best made sense of both the peculiar mass appeal of the political ideologies and their sociological *function* as a common vision of a people shaping their view of reality, their values, and their very souls. In the context of Dawson's work as a whole, then, political religion was an example of the dynamic historical relationship between religion and culture in a secular age. Dawson's understanding of political religion has been substantiated by both modern scholarship and by evidence contemporary to the interwar years. Dawson's contribution to this body of scholarship, as outlined below, is the manner in which he explained the roots of political religion against the background of human nature and modern history.

While Dawson's writings of the 1930s were among the first sustained discussions of political religion in Britain, other European scholars studied it then as well, such as Franz Werfel (1890–1945), Eric Voegelin (1901–1985), and Raymond Aron (1905–1983).[12] After the Second World War, the concept faded from scholarly attention. However, since the fall of communism in western Eurasia by 1991 and the rise of fundamentalist terrorism in the early twenty-first century, the concept has returned today in the work of Michael Burleigh,[13] Emilio Gentile,[14] Hans Maier,[15] and the journal *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* (founded in 2000). Analysis of Dawson's work contributes to this scholarship profound insight into the characteristics of political religion and its roots in the French Revolution, nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, the Great War, and what Dawson called the "spiritual vacuum" of modern European culture.

The use of the concept of political religion is often comparative, seeking to show that totalitarian movements in different countries have in common the "sacralisation of politics," which occurs

when a state confers sacred status on an earthly entity such as nation or race.[16] Despite its limitations as a conceptual category and tendency to overemphasize religious-psychological aspects, Hans Maier argues that the term "political religion" is necessary to account for the psychological and sociological appeal of twentieth-century despotic regimes.[17]

In order to appreciate Dawson's thought on political religion, one must grasp something of his larger project as an historian. He sought to write a new kind of history different than the ecclesiastical history of the nineteenth century that studied the institutional church and its hierarchy, theology, morality, liturgy, and discipline.[18] He wanted to study religion not so much as an institution but as a cultural force. To do this he made use of the new disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and comparative religion to investigate the role of religion in human culture and cultural change in world history. This he did in *The Age of the Gods* (1928) and *Progress and Religion* (1929). Here he examined ancient civilizations from the Indus River to Mesoamerica. He showed how the temple-complex served as the central nervous system of the Mesopotamian city-states, for example. While material factors also affected cultural development, Dawson argued that the rational and spiritual elements of culture determined the creativity and the progress of civilizations. Thus, religion had played a far more important role in world history than theorists had usually assigned to it.[19] The dynamic role that religion had historically played in cultural development was the bridge with which Dawson connected religious and secular history.

This historiographical project shaped Dawson's understanding of political developments after the Great War. It linked to the idea of political religion in a key passage from *Progress and Religion*: "Every living culture must possess some spiritual dynamic, which provides the energy necessary for that sustained social effort which is civilization. Normally this dynamic is supplied by a religion, but in exceptional circumstances the religious impulse may disguise itself under philosophical or political forms."[20] Dawson was very perceptive to write this in 1929—before Hitler came to power,

though after Mussolini and Stalin had established themselves. *The religious impulse of human beings could disguise itself under political forms*; this was how Dawson connected his studies of ancient and medieval civilizations to his contemporary world. The religious impulse of humanity, which was so pervasive and powerful in human history, could appear hidden under political clothing, could take on political shapes, and even could deny religion in the name of atheism. This is a bold claim that requires close analysis.

Roots of Political Religion

By the 1930s Dawson understood the expansion of politics not in terms of one particular ideology, as if Nazism was the real problem and communism the answer. Rather, he saw all of the major political movements of his day (communism, fascism, Nazism, socialism) as the result of deeper forces such as the mechanization of mass culture. Even democratic countries did not escape his prognosis; thus, he predicted in 1939 the rise of a "democratic totalitarianism which would make the same universal claims on the life of the individual as the totalitarian dictatorships of the Continent."[21] One could not blame one ideology as the source of the problem over the others. One had to go behind all of these political developments to search for their common historical roots.

The roots of political religion have been traced by political scientists and historians back to the fourteenth-century BC Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaton,[22] who wielded state power as the sole political and religious representative of the god Aten, and to the sixteenth-century radical and Dominican friar Tommaso Campanella,[23] whose utopian *City of the Sun* greatly impressed Lenin. However, Dawson focused on the more immediate roots in modern history.

The first root reached back to the activities of the Jacobins in the French Revolution. As the political events of the 1930s grew more and more ominous, Dawson directed his scholarly attention toward the French Revolution. His *Gods of Revolution* was published posthumously in 1972, but much of it was written during the 1930s.[24] Sickness, severe depression, and restless moving from rented house to rented house prevented him from finishing the

book. Nevertheless, the book studied the underlying psychological and religious forces that gave the revolution such world-transforming power. Robespierre (1758–1794) was the ultimate representative of a universal religion of nature that would be a real national religion like the civic religions of the ancient world.[25] The new state cult, complete with civic festivals and churches, appropriated Christian ideas: "Like Christianity, it was a religion of human salvation, the salvation of the world by the power of man set free by Reason. The Cross has been replaced by the Tree of Liberty, the Grace of God by the Reason of Man, and Redemption by Revolution."[26] In the name of those ideas, the Great Terror was unleashed on all who opposed them. Because the Jacobins struggled for something more than mere political goals, their movement took on global significance. As the French political thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) had seen before Dawson,[27] the Jacobins created a powerful political religion.

Instead of finishing his book on the French Revolution in the late 1930s, Dawson turned to contemporary affairs and wrote *Beyond Politics* (1939). Here his studies of French eighteenth-century history proved useful:

> Anyone who studies the history of the First French Republic in the light of recent political developments cannot fail to be impressed by the way in which the Jacobins anticipated practically all the characteristic features of the modern totalitarian regimes: the dictatorship of a party in the name of the community, the use of propaganda and appeals to mass emotion, as well as of violence and terrorism, the conception of revolutionary justice as a social weapon, the regulation of economic life in order to realize revolutionary ideals, and above all the attempt to enforce a uniform ideology on the whole people and the proscription and persecution of every other form of political thought.[28]

Dawson saw that the Jacobins sought to destroy the traditional distinction between church and state in the name of the

all-embracing politico-religious community.[29] That was the essence of the new totalitarian regimes of the early twentieth century. Contemporary scholars have corroborated Dawson's view of the French Revolution as the first root of twentieth-century political religion.[30] Russian revolutionaries, for example, distinctly recalled the French Revolution as an inspiration. Russian children were even named after Robespierre.[31] Though fascists were ambivalent toward the French Revolution and Nazis hated it, the Revolution nevertheless prepared the way for these later movements too by mobilizing the masses around ideological uniformity.[32]

The second major root of political religion in Dawson's thought was the spiritual vacuum that resulted by the late nineteenth century out of the spiritual anarchy and materialism of the age. His historical work on the nineteenth century is nowhere systematically presented. One has to glean it from articles, lectures,[33] and parts of books.[34] Perhaps this was because "[f]ew things are more difficult to understand than the mind of the immediate past."[35] However, he wrote one book focused exclusively on the nineteenth century: *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (1933). Here he argued that the Oxford Movement of John Keble, John Henry Newman, and others was the expression of an unique moment in English history (the 1830s) when the English mind was alive to adventure and to ideas. The movement protested against the spirit of the age, the utilitarianism and secularism of nineteenth-century liberalism, as well as the dominance of the English state over the Church of England, in the name of true spiritual freedom.[36]

The political religions, Dawson argued, were also reactions against the tendencies of the nineteenth century. They, too, reacted against the individualism and materialism that dominated especially the later nineteenth century when the tremendous economic developments resulting from liberal policies of free trade and free competition came to fruition. This created the "problem of wealth." It was an age of confidence, of progress, of exploitation, and of the ideal that government and church should get out of the way of trade and industry. In this way, material interests developed unchecked in an atmosphere of spiritual anarchy.[37] The secularization

of the age destroyed the religious unity and common moral values that were the basis of political and social life. A "spiritual vacuum" developed in which collective guilt, social idealism, and revolutionary movements could take root—such as nationalism and socialism, both firmly established in the nineteenth century. "The revolutionary attitude—and it is perhaps the characteristic religious attitude of Modern Europe—is in fact nothing but a symptom of the divorce between religion and social life."[38] The political religions of the early twentieth century arose as an attempt to "find some substitute for the lost religious foundations of society and to replace the utilitarian individualism of the liberal-capitalist State by a new spiritual community."[39] In this attempt to create new spiritual communities around ideological uniformity, the new states threatened the individual conscience and the Church. They claimed the whole of life, eroding the distinction between church and state in the interest of creating a secular church-state. In this way the political religions were a kind of anti-Oxford Movement, which had sought to renew the Church by more clearly distinguishing it *from* the state. The political religions wanted to collapse the two into one great Leviathan, transcending the distinction and reverting to ancient paganism when deity and ruler were one.[40]

The notion of a spiritual vacuum is important to understanding Dawson's views on the political religions. The force of vacuums is determined by a pressure differential between the weight of the atmosphere and the low pressure inside the vacuum. The vacuum has no attractive force of its own—the force is supplied from the outside pushing particles into the vacuum. It is the weight of the external environment that pushes its way into the emptiness. By referring to a "spiritual" vacuum, Dawson implicitly holds that this is true of the soul as well. The vacant soul is like a vacuum: it is an empty place into which the weight of the surrounding spiritual atmosphere tries to push itself. The ideologies and prejudices and values of the time try to force entry. The spirits of the age enter the house if they find it unoccupied. If the soul remains empty, something will eventually breach the walls and take control of it. If "nature abhors a vacuum," then the soul cannot remain empty and neutral—it must have a vision, a meaning to fill it.

Viktor Frankl (1905–1997), the Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, wrote the best-selling book *Man's Search for Meaning* and picked up the idea of the spiritual vacuum—the "existential vacuum," as he called it. He described the existential vacuum as a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century. This vacuum is endemic to the human condition. It had been exacerbated by the loss of traditions in the modern world. Traditions had helped human beings make choices. They had helped them to know what ought to be done in life. Their influence had become weak, creating the existential vacuum. Those suffering in that vacuum experienced meaninglessness and boredom.[41]

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries intellectuals injected their influence into the volatile spiritual atmosphere of the age. Hegel and his followers justified the state as a manifestation of spiritual forces, and his "religion of the state" influenced everyone from fascists to communists.[42] In the case of fascism, Dawson blamed Nietzsche, George Sorell,[43] Marinetti,[44] and D'Annunzio[45] as the spiritual fathers of the movement. Their theoretical justification of violence and terrorism helped transform a national movement against defeatism into a totalitarian cult of the will to power.[46]

The political religions promised social salvation. In 1924 Mussolini commissioned new lyrics for the song "Giovinezza" ("Youth"), popularized by elite Italian soldiers in the Great War, as the fascist anthem. Singers caroled that they "swear faith to Mussolini" and "redeeming fascism."[47] This appeal to the transformation of human beings was present even in socialism. In a 1932 lecture "Conservatism," Dawson explained that the basis of the appeal of socialism was not so much political or economic as religious:

> Socialism offers men not political order but social salvation; not responsible government but a deliverance from the sense of moral guilt that oppresses modern society: or rather, the shifting of that burden from society as a whole to some abstract power such as capitalism or finance or bourgeois civilization which is endowed with the attributes of

> a powerful and malevolent spirit. Thus, Socialism is able to enlist all those religious emotions and impulses which no longer find an outlet through their old religious channels. The type of man who a century ago would have been a revivalist or even the founder of a new sect, today devotes himself to social and political propaganda. And this gives Socialism a spiritual power which the older political parties did not possess, though Liberalism, especially on the Continent, sometimes showed similar tendencies.[48]

Thus, socialism could appeal with great power to the spiritual vacuum created by secularization and the moral guilt associated with nineteenth-century capitalism.

The third root of political religion in Dawson's thought was the aftermath of the Great War, a war that has been called the "original sin" of the twentieth century.[49] While the war itself was to a "great extent the product of the forces of disintegration that were already breaking up the nineteenth-century order,"[50] there were two major results. First, the war ruined the international organization of world trade and world finance by reparation payments, war debts, inflation, tariff barriers, and unemployment. Looking back in 1935 he saw the war as "directly responsible for the economic crisis from which we are suffering today."[51] The economic crisis of 1929 led an increasing number of people to accept the necessity of a scientifically planned economy, as in Russia's Five Year Plan. It also fueled the final stage of Hitler's political rise. Furthermore, with the collapse of four empires, political stability was lost and the forces of disintegration greatly strengthened. Dawson pointed to the revival of terrorism, religious persecution, massacres of minorities, torture, and professional assassination.[52]

Second, Dawson argued that the "spiritual results" of the Great War were just as significant.[53] The phrase "spiritual results" is striking. It does not refer simply to the participation of French priests at the front, for example, or political sermons by bishops. That would be the view of the ecclesiastical historian who focuses on institutional religion. Rather, Dawson viewed religious forces as

those deep and powerful social currents that shape the worldviews and psychology of human beings. The religious needs of people could be expressed in collective social ideals of action and the sacralization of things or ideas, such as "nation" or "race." Thus, there could be a "spiritual history" of the Great War.[54] Dawson thought that the conflict dealt a mortal blow to the liberal ideals of humanitarianism and optimism, while arousing dormant instincts to violence. "In a word it changed the spiritual atmosphere of Europe." While communism and the ideal of social revolution had existed since Marx and Engels, "they acquired a new significance and power of appeal in the changed atmosphere and circumstances of the world after the War."[55] The war helped create an environment in which political ideologies offering total explanations became appealing. They were suddenly new and exciting ideals calling for direct, collective human action.

Contemporaries understood this, too. As early as 1919, the economist John Maynard Keynes wrote of the situation in Russia, Austria, and Hungary where the misery and disintegration of life were rampant. The situations there showed how in the "final catastrophe the malady of the body passes over into malady of the mind. Economic privation proceeds by easy stages … until the limit of human endurance is reached at last and counsels of despair and madness stir the sufferers from the lethargy which precedes the crisis." This created a dangerous environment. "The power of ideas is sovereign, and [man] listens to whatever instruction of hope, illusion, or revenge is carried to him on the air."[56] In writing this, Keynes outlined the conditions in which the political religions where even then arising.

Historians today have supported Dawson's sense for the significance of the spiritual results of the Great War. In Germany, the war and hyperinflation set "hundreds of thousands of indigents in motion, as vagrancy became as epidemic as it would be in the US Depression," Michael Burleigh explains. Some of these vagrants were wandering prophets, such as Ludwig Christian Haeusser (1881–1927), pandering to the mental confusion of the German people during the early 1920s. They often traveled barefoot, bearded, and long-haired, prophesying the end of the world and

pointing to the need for a new type of man to create a new society.[57] There was also growing interest in occultism, spread by figures such as Guido List (1848–1919), which formed the occult roots of Nazism.[58] The brutality of total war spilled over into violence against civilians in Germany and other parts of the continent. This "became a permanent condition, in the sense that political *opponents* were regarded as deadly *enemies*."[59] All of these material and spiritual factors created an environment in which Hitler could rise by appealing to both the economic and political needs of the people as well as to their religious and messianic hopes.

In fact, the spiritual results of the Great War created the conditions in which Lenin, Mussolini, and Hitler could rise to power. Hans Maier writes about the devastations following 1917: the collapse of liberalism, the self-doubt, and the "longing for a new unity and completeness that prepared the ground for the great simplifiers."[60] There is no doubt of the connection of the Great War to the rise of the dictators. Dawson wrote:

> The age of the Great War was an age of iron, but it gave birth to no military genius and no great statesman; its political leaders were men of paper. The one man of iron that the age produced arose from the most unlikely quarter that it is possible to conceive—from among the fanatics and revolutionary agitators who wandered about the watering places of Switzerland and Germany conspiring ineffectually and arguing with one another.[61]

Lenin was able to travel from exile to Russia in 1917 and immediately take a leading role in the Bolshevik movement as a direct result of the Great War. This happened because after the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, it became imperative for the Germans to knock Russia out of the war. Consequently, the Germans, who clearly saw the power and importance of Lenin's personality, sought to help the antiwar movement flourish in Russia by facilitating Lenin's return across Europe and funding the Bolshevik party.[62]

Mussolini fought in the Great War and received severe wounds before his disillusion and break with socialism by 1919. His experience of trench warfare and the brotherhood of radicalized soldiers it produced led him to see this group as a powerful political force.[63] He recalls the marks of the war on his soul in his dictated autobiography: the suffering, the dead, the disillusion, and the betrayal. All of this gave him force and concentration after the war. He wanted to revive the Italian nation through a "wholly new political conception, adequate to the living reality of the twentieth century." Thus, he helped found the fascist movement out of veteran, revolutionary, and nationalist groups as a heroic cohesive force that would stop the forces of dissolution.[64] Taking advantage of the political and economic chaos of the immediate postwar years, the movement was by 1922 already the most significant political force in the country.[65] Dawson was undoubtedly correct in his view that Benito Mussolini and the fascist movement reacted against the pessimism and defeatism so characteristic of the immediate postwar period in Italy owing to the disillusionment with the results of the war.[66]

Like Mussolini, Adolf Hitler was a veteran of the Great War. While recovering from severe wounds in a hospital in November of 1918, he learned of the end of the war. As he recorded in *Mein Kampf*, he fell into deep depression. Had everything been in vain? All the sacrifices and deaths, in vain? "I, for my part, decided to go into politics," he wrote.[67] As in the case of Mussolini, the Great War was the authentic experience that connected him emotionally to millions of ordinary suffering people looking for new meaning.[68] Unlike in Britain where veterans never became a separate and violent political group because they were immediately integrated into the political system,[69] the Nazi Party grew out of discontented veterans and revolutionaries (as with fascism in Italy). Hitler joined in 1920. The party stressed German racial purity, the failure of democracy and laissez-faire capitalism, and the injustices forced on Germany as a result of the Great War. In this case, too, the war created the economic and spiritual conditions that brought Hitler to power.

When the first unabridged English translation of *Mein Kampf* appeared in 1939, Dawson's review appeared in *The Tablet*. He called it a "remarkably frank book." The value of the book to the English reader, Dawson thought, was that it revealed a hidden world alien from his traditions. "The chief cause of the mistakes that have been made during the last twenty years," he wrote, "is that we have concentrated our attention on one series of factors as though they were the whole of political reality and ignored the rest. And the success of National-Socialism is due to the way in which Hitler has mobilized and exploited these unseen factors [i.e., spiritual forces]."[70] Hitler understood the power of spiritual forces. But blinded by their focus on the surface of politics, Western politicians had made grave mistakes in their dealings with Hitler. Perhaps Dawson was thinking of Neville Chamberlain at Munich in 1938 where he signed the infamous agreement to hand over the Sudeten region to Germany in an effort to appease Hitler. Although Chamberlain was seen as a hero at the time, other politicians such as Winston Churchill shared Dawson's view of Nazism as a dangerous religious force. Churchill understood by 1935 how Hitler had exorcized the spirit of despair from Germany after the Great War and how he was building the "Totalitarian State" based on concentration camps and hatred of the Jews and Christians by "what [has] become the new religion of the German peoples, namely, the worship of Germany under the symbols of the old gods of Nordic paganism."[71]

Hitler knew how to harness hidden sub-political forces such as instinctive emotion in the interest of power. He did not ignore the spiritual factor in social life and could exploit it for his ends. To Dawson, the rise of Nazi power was both a religious and a political problem. In 1943 he wrote:

> It is not possible to face the tremendous power drive of the new totalitarian parties by purely intellectual means, by argument and logic and philosophy, nor yet by ethical idealism, nor by a quietist withdrawal into the religious life, in the static sense. For Hitler, at any rate, is very conscious of the

> spiritual factor in social life, he returns to it again and again in *Mein Kampf*. All his early propaganda is based on the importance of faith and the power of a few men with intense convictions to overcome all obstacles and all material difficulties. The weakness of Germany, he wrote, is not due to its lack of armaments, but its lack of arms is due to its spiritual weakness. And the secret of success was to be found not in material organisation, but in the recovery of spiritual power.[72]

Hitler realized implicitly that the liberal solution of privatizing the spiritual did not work. The separation of religion and culture was unsustainable. The people needed collective beliefs and he sought to arouse them to gain power. He (and others) wielded an ideology that in effect was a political religion, transcending church and state. It combined political goals and spiritual appeal into a monistic battering ram that "swept everything that stood in its path—the Weimar Republic, the Socialists, the Catholic Centre, the Catholic Corporative régime in Austria—and it has gone on sweeping things away ever since."[73]

While there was widespread endorsement of the Soviet system in British intellectual circles,[74] Dawson was influenced by continental scholars more critical of communism.[75] His view that communism and Christianity were absolutely antithetical has been largely substantiated by contemporary scholarship and access to Soviet archives after 1991.[76] Communists persecuted Christianity because it was a competitor on their ground. He thought that Bolshevism attracted the discontented and the disinherited proletarian, as well as the disinterested idealist, because "Man cannot live in a spiritual void; he needs some fixed social standards and some absolute intellectual principles. Bolshevism at least replaces the spiritual anarchy of bourgeois society by a rigid order and substitutes for the doubt and scepticism of an irresponsible intelligentsia the certitude of an absolute authority embodied in social institutions."[77] He explained that

> Bolshevism is not a political movement that can be judged by its practical aims and achievements, nor is it an abstract

> theory that can be understood apart from its historical context. It differs from other contemporary movements above all by its organic unity, its fusion of theory and practice, and by the way in which its practical policy is bound up with its philosophy. In a world of relativity and skepticism it stands for absolute principles; for a creed that is incarnate in a social order and for an authority that demands the entire allegiance of the whole man.[78]

Because communism demanded the allegiance of the whole man it did not function as an ordinary political party. "Thus the communist system, as planned and largely created by Lenin, was a kind of *atheocracy*, a spiritual order of the most rigid and exclusive type, rather than a political order."[79] It enforced discipline. Its members served the proletariat, a "mystical entity" and "universal church" of the Marxian believers. The populace was an "unregenerate mass" that it is the duty of communist leaders to guide and organize according to the principles of the true faith. "The communist is not a representative of the people: he is the priest of an idea."[80] In this way, though a secular creed, communism functioned as a religion.

Ironically, in a certain way, communism and the other political religions were *more* religious than the average Christian. "They refuse to divide life. They demand that the whole of life shall be devoted and dedicated to that social end which they regard as supremely valuable."[81] This startling insight of Dawson's is confirmed by the words of Mussolini himself:

> I wanted to create the impression of a complete and rigid consistence with an ideal. This was not a scheming on my part for personal gain; it was a deep need in my nature of what I believed, and I still hold on to—as my life's dedication—namely, that once a man sets up to be the expounder of an ideal or of a new school of thought he must consistently and intensively live daily life and fight battles for the doctrines that he teaches—at any cost until victory—to the end![82]

Mussolini longed to live an integrated daily life according to heroic ideals in a way analogous to the saint in the religious sphere. The political religions could likewise inspire and require the allegiance of the whole person.

Others in Britain with very different political sympathies than Dawson also used religious metaphors to describe communism. The Irish playwright and socialist George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) wrote that "Russia has not only political and economic strength: she has also religious strength. The Russians have a creed in which they believe; and it is a catholic creed."[83] Describing the new civilization arising in Russia—and hinting at their own social philosophy—the Webbs included chapters in volume two of *Soviet Communism* on, "The Remaking of Man," "Science the Salvation of Mankind," and, "The Good Life." They specifically compared the Communist Party to a "typical religious order in the Roman Catholic Church" and highlighted its membership based on denial of private property, acceptance of a creed, passage through a probationary period, voluntary good social works, assessments of character, rendering of obedience, and periodic "cleansing" through "public inquisition."[84] A distinctive feature for them was the new way of life inaugurated by communism—the promotion, "among all its participants, what it conceives to be 'the good life.'"[85] G. D. G. and Margaret Cole noted that the Communist Party "has been likened to … the Jesuit Order" and indeed required high levels of faith, discipline, and devotion, but in the end they denied the comparison because the members were not cut off from the world or celibate.[86]

Is Political Religion a Meaningful Concept?

In Dawson's thought, the concept of political religion was a tool used to compare dictatorships and try to understand their appeal in Europe after the Great War. Despite extensive recent scholarship supporting the careful use of this concept, there are some who deny that "political religion" is meaningful at all. Explicitly secular ideologies cannot be political "religions." Richard Evans, for example, asserts that Hitler insisted that Nazism was about the here and

the now, not about a future heaven. This observation attempted to negate the very idea of Nazism as a political religion because religion, if it is anything at all, is about belief in the supernatural, in the eternal, in God. While Nazism did borrow language and ritual from religion, Evans says, it appealed not so much to those looking for spiritual fulfilment in a secular age as to the most secularized part of the population, the organized working class.[87]

While Evans's skepticism is useful, there are compelling reasons to disagree with his conclusion. First, there is the evidence of the many contemporaries of Dawson, from a variety of political backgrounds, who explained the new political developments they witnessed in terms of political religion. Second, a growing body of scholarship has fruitfully examined in detail the language, rituals, and appeal of the totalitarian movements.

Third, there is an alternative understanding of religion than that of Evans, who in his essay seems to view religion solely as "church" or belief in the supernatural. This was the view of the old ecclesiastical history that studied religion in terms of doctrine and institutions. However, developments in the philosophy of religion, anthropology, and sociology of the early twentieth century expanded the concept of religion beyond simply that of "church." They made it possible to think in terms of political or secular religion. Two thinkers especially important in this development were the German theologian Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) and the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917).

The historian Emilio Gentile argues that political religion became a plausible concept when considering the idea of the "sacred" developed by Rudolf Otto in *The Idea of the Holy*. In Otto's thought, the political dimension of human life could be a place of sacred experience "as frequently occurs during times of great collective emotion such as wars or revolutions."[88] Collective experience of the *mysterium tremendum*, the fascinating-terrifying manifestation of immense, mysterious, and majestic power, can develop into beliefs and myths connected to a secular entity (such as nation, state, revolution, war, humanity, society, race, proletariat, liberty), as happened during and after the Great War.[89] An example

of such an experience comes from Melita Maschmann's memoirs of the Nazi takeover in January 1933 and the massive demonstration in Berlin:

> On the evening of January 30 my parents took us children, my twin brother and myself, into the centre of the city. There we witnessed the torchlight procession with which the National Socialists celebrated their victory. Some of the uncanny feel of that night remains with me even today. The crashing tread of the feet, the sombre pomp of the red and black flags, the flickering torches on the faces and the songs with melodies that were at once aggressive and sentimental. …
>
> I longed to hurl myself into this current, to be submerged and borne along by it. …
>
> I was overcome with a burning desire to belong to these people for whom it was a matter of life and death.[90]

This description captures the awe, energy, and majestic power of a movement that spoke to the longing of Maschmann and many others of her generation to belong to something greater than themselves.

The transference of the sacred to earthly objects is called "sacralization." While he did not use the term, Dawson essentially described it when he wrote in 1936 about the transference of religious faith and emotion to secular objects in the political movements of his day.[91] When this happens, "nation," "race," or "class" become absolute principles of collective existence and the main source of values. They are objects of "veneration and dedication, even to the point of self-sacrifice."[92] Society can set up its own gods, Durkheim remarked, as during the early years of the French Revolution when secular objects such as homeland, liberty, and reason were transformed into sacred things.[93]

If the sacred could be transferred to such objects, those objects could then function as the basis of a moral community. This was the functionalist insight of Émile Durkheim: religion shaped society in an all-embracing way. Dawson drew much from this sociological

perspective on religion, although he was more influenced by Ernst Troeltsch[94] and the Boasian tradition of anthropology[95] than by Durkheim. Thus, in *Progress and Religion*, as quoted earlier, Dawson wrote: "Every living culture must possess some spiritual dynamic, which provides the energy necessary for that sustained social effort which is civilization. Normally this dynamic is supplied by a religion, but in exceptional circumstances the religious impulse may disguise itself under philosophical or political forms."[96] Such a sociological view of religion is unthinkable in terms of the old ecclesiastical history. However, by focusing on the important function of religion in historic human cultures, and on the possibility of the sacralization of worldly entities, it became possible for Dawson and others to see the totalitarian movements in terms of political religion.

Obviously, Lenin, Mussolini, and Hitler did not found supernatural religions. They founded decidedly secular systems. Nevertheless, those systems did resemble Durkheim's 1912 description of religion as a "*unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions—beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church*. … [T]he idea of church suggests that religion must be something eminently collective."[97] In the case of the political ideologies, the "sacred things" that were "set apart" were the social *ends* that were absolute (e.g., racial purity or the classless society). Dawson wrote that the "determination to build Jerusalem, at once and on the spot, is the very force which is responsible for the intolerance and violence of the new political order."[98] The social ends of fascism, communism, and Nazism caused them to function as political religions.

In terms of this functionalist approach to religion, A. James Gregor offers a clear test that one is dealing with a political religion:

> Throughout history, one of the most important functions of religion has been to explain the ultimate origin and goal of created beings—and thereby to specifically provide codes

> of conduct, the grounds for moral judgment, the identification of infractions, the depiction of public purposes, as well as the prescription of individual and collective ends. When a subset of political ideologies expressly assumes such metaphysical and normative responsibilities, it can be spoken of as a "political religion."[99]

In other words, contrary to Evans, even if Hitler denied any supernatural purposes in Nazism, if Nazism took on the metaphysical and normative functions of religion, then it is a "political religion." Evidence supports the view that Nazism did so intend: the race as the highest good, the political cults, rituals, festivals, sacred spaces, sacred days, martyrs, rallies, and the moral revolution that saw the human will as the ultimate source of moral values and Hitler as the embodiment of that sacred will.[100] Thus, in a speech of April 12, 1922, Hitler told his audience that the mighty mission of the Nazi movement was to give the searching masses a new and strong belief "to which they will swear and abide by."[101] Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945), a close associate of Hitler, wrote to the future Führer in 1926:

> You gave a name to the suffering of an entire generation who were yearning for real men, for meaningful tasks. … What you uttered is the catechism of a new political credo amid the desperation of a collapsing, godless world. You did not fall silent. A god gave you the strength to voice our suffering. You formulated our torment in redemptive words, formed statements of confidence in the coming miracle.[102]

Clearly, here was a man searching for meaning so intensely that he felt compelled to use religious metaphors to describe it. Later, as Reich Minister of Propaganda, Goebbels told journalists that the purpose of propaganda was to "work on people until they are addicted to us" and that the "propagandist must be the man with the greatest knowledge of souls."[103]

Communism also intended to take the functions of religion despite (because of?) its hostility to religion. Representative evidence from the Soviet Union includes a party directive of 1923 concerning the destruction of the religious beliefs of workers and peasants. This would require "systematic propaganda" linking religion to the interests of the ruling classes and replacing "outmoded" religious ideas with clear "scientific views of nature and human society." It would be necessary to publish easy-to-read pamphlets and leaflets that "answer questions about the origins of the world, of life and the essence of human relations."[104] Clearly, the communist intended to take over the metaphysical and normative function of religion.

A final example comes from Mussolini, who in an article on fascism wrote in 1932 that

> [t]he Fascist conception of life is a religious one, in which man is viewed in his immanent relation to a higher law, endowed with an objective will transcending the individual and raising him to conscious membership of a spiritual society. … The Fascist state is an inwardly accepted standard and rule of conduct, a discipline of the whole person; it permeates the will no less than the intellect. It stands for a principle which becomes the central motive of man as a member of civilized society, sinking deep down into his personality; it dwells in the heart of the man of action and of the thinker, of the artist and of the man of science: soul of the soul.[105]

Mussolini himself describes fascism essentially as a political religion that permeates all of life to the depths of the human soul. Clearly, the concept of political religion is necessary to understand the significance of fascism, Nazism, and communism.

Conclusion

Hans Maier notes that the phenomenon of political religion "reminds us that religion does not allow itself to be easily banished

from society, and that, where this is tried, it returns in unpredictable and perverted forms."[106] Dawson's sensitivity to the place of religion in human life and history, developed in his scholarship of the 1920s and early 1930s, led him to the same conclusion. In a secular age the function of religion in society could be taken over by political ideologies. A spiritual vacuum could not last—the drive that pushes humans toward *meaning* was irresistible. Politicians who understood how to manipulate this vacuum could tap into tremendous power. By rejecting the classical liberal ideal of relegating religion to the private sphere, they could create, instead, a religion of politics, tapping into the deeper parts of the human person. As Dawson grasped, Mussolini, Hitler, and Lenin created systems that appealed to the whole man. They sought to transcend the distinction between church and state to create an all-encompassing moral community. They sacralized worldly objects that could inspire life, sacrifice, and acceptance of death in their followers. Dawson's view of political religion arose out of this understanding of human nature and the world-historical relationship between religion and culture *applied to the twentieth century*. That is his essential contribution to the scholarship on political religion.

Endnotes

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Régime and the French Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 156.
2. A. J. P. Taylor, *English History: 1914–1945* (London: Book Club Associates, 1965), 1.
3. Ibid., 76; "The War Cabinet, 1917," in *British Government 1914–1953: Select Documents*, ed. G. H. L. Le May (London: Mathuen, 1955), 229.
4. Taylor, 2.
5. Christopher Dawson, "The Claims of Politics," *Scrutiny* VIII, no. 2 (1939): 136. This article is reprinted in this journal issue.
6. Hans Maier, "Concepts for the Comparison of Dictatorships: 'Totalitarianism' and 'Political Religions,'" in *Totalitarianism and Political Religions*, ed. Hans Maier (New York: Routledge, 1996), 199–201.
7. Jens Petersen, "The History of the Concept of Totalitarianism in Italy," in *Totalitarianism and Political Religions*, ed. Hans Maier (New York: Routledge, 1996), 6.

8. Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," 1932, http://www.milestonedocuments.com/documents/view/benito-mussolinisthe-doctrine-of-fascism/text.
9. A. James Gregor, *Totalitarianism and Political Religion: An Intellectual History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 5.
10. Christopher Dawson, *Beyond Politics* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1939), 104, 105.
11. Adam Schwartz, "Confronting the 'Totalitarian Antichrist': Christopher Dawson and Totalitarianism," *Catholic Historical Review* 89 (July 2003): 464–488.
12. Hans Maier, "Political Religion: A Concept and Its Limitations," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* VIII, (2007): 9–10.
13. Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005) and *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the Great War to the War on Terror* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008).
14. Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, trans. George Staunton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
15. Maier, "Political Religion: A Concept and Its Limitations."
16. Gentile, xiv.
17. Maier, "Political Religion: A Concept and Its Limitations," 15.
18. John Alzog, *Manual of Universal Church History*, trans. F. J. Pabisch and Thomas S. Byrne, vol. 1 (Cincinnati, OH: Robert Clarke, 1874), 7–9.
19. Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 81.
20. Ibid., 3–4.
21. Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, 3.
22. Eric Voegelin, *The Political Religions*, ed. Manfred Henningsen, trans. Virginia Ann Schildauer, *The Collected Words of Eric Voegelin*, vol. 5 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000). Originally published in 1938 in Vienna and quickly suppressed by authorities.
23. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, 17–22; Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, 86–87.
24. Scott says in her biography that Dawson "had started to write a book on the French Revolution, when at the beginning of 1936 he had a serious illness." See Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson*, 127. In a footnote she remarked that this was posthumously published as *The Gods of Revolution*. Thus, Dawson wrote some if not much of this book in the 1930s, although he made some changes later; in fact, the last chapter mentioned the Second World War. As Scott recorded: "In 1938 Frank Sheed was anxiously pressing Christopher to

finish his book on the French Revolution but he was to be disappointed for by this time he [Dawson] had turned again to solving the problems of the day in a successor to *Religion and the Modern State* entitled *Beyond Politics*. … *The Gods of Revolution* was to be originally entitled *The European Revolution*, as is found in the Dawson archive at the University of St. Thomas (box 3, folders 27–34). Manuscripts of eight chapters are here. The fact that the bibliography in the 1972 publication refers to no scholarship more recent than 1935 strongly suggests that the composition of the book largely took place during the 1930s.

25 Christopher Dawson, *The Gods of Revolution* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972), 101–105.

26. Ibid., 75.

27. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that the leaders of the French Revolution "had a fanatical faith in their vocation—that of transforming the social system, root and branch, and regenerating the whole human race. Of this passionate idealism was born what was in fact a new religion, giving rise to some of those vast changes in human conduct that religion has produced in other ages." Tocqueville, *The Old Régime and the French Revolution*, 156.

28. Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, 71.

29. Ibid., 72.

30. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*; Gentile, 26–29.

31. Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, 51.

32. George L. Mosse, "Fascism and the French Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 1 (1989): 5–26.

33. Such as Christopher Dawson, "Religion in the Age of Revolution," *The Tablet*, August 29; September 5, 12; October 10, 24, 1936; Christopher Dawson, *The Movement Towards Christian Unity in the Nineteenth Century* (Latrobe, PA: Saint Vincent Archabbey, 2006). This latter source was the Wimmer Lecture for 1960.

34. Such as Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion* and *The Movement of World Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

35. Christopher Dawson, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (London: Saint Austin, 2001).

36. Ibid., xi, xii, 10–11.

37. Christopher Dawson, "The Crisis of the West," *Dublin Review* CLXXXI (1927): 267; "The Problem of Wealth," *Spectator* CXLVII (1931): 485; *Religion and the Modern State* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1935), 1; and *Beyond Politics*, 75.

38. Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 178.
39. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 44. Later Dawson interpreted the political crisis of the twentieth century in terms of the general secularization of Europe after the Reformation; see Christopher Dawson, *The Judgment of the Nations* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1942).
40. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, 2, 9.
41. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Pocket Books, 1963), 61, 167–171.
42. Christopher Dawson, "The Politics of Hegel," *Dublin Review* 212, no. 427 (1943): 97, 105; Gregor, chapter 2.
43. Georges Eugène Sorel (1847–1922) was a French philosopher and theorist of revolutionary syndicalism. His notion of the power of myth in people's lives inspired Marxists and Fascists. Born in Cherbourg, France, Sorel worked as an engineer for years before completely devoting himself to study and writing. His 1908 book *Réflexions sur la violence* argued that the success of the proletariat class depended on violent revolution. Sorel was influenced by Tocqueville, Proudhon, Nietzsche, Marx, and others.
44. Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti (1876–1944) was an Italian poet and editor, the founder of the Futurist movement, and a fascist ideologue. He lived and studied in Egypt and France, was trained as a lawyer, and decided to devote his life to literary pursuits. His *Futurist Manifesto* (1909) initiated an artistic philosophy, Futurism, which was a rejection of the past and a celebration of speed, machinery, violence, youth, and industry. Marinetti became an active supporter of Benito Mussolini.
45. Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938) was an Italian poet, journalist, novelist, and dramatist who influenced the Italian fascist movement. Born to the wealthy mayor of Abruzzo, D'Annunzio studied at the University of Rome La Sapienza. He invented much of the ritual (balcony speeches, the Roman salute, the use of religious symbols in a secular setting) later used by his rival Mussolini during his (D'Annunzio's) occupation of Fiume and his leadership of the Italian Regency of Carnaro from 1919–1920. Despite their great differences, both he and Mussolini "attempted to transform their countrymen into more heroic types, rejecting the Italian tradition of civility in favor of an ethic of violence and imperialism." See Michael A. Ledeen, *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), viii.
46. Dawson, "The Claims of Politics," 139.
47. Fascist Anthem: "Youth," in Marla Stone, *The Fascist Revolution in Italy: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013), 68–69.

48. Christopher Dawson, "Conservatism," University of St. Thomas Archives, Christopher Dawson Collection, box 3, folder 38. This unpublished lecture was edited by myself and published in *The Political Science Reviewer* XXXIX (2010): 232–262. Viewing the appeal of socialism in religious terms was not exclusive to conservatives like Dawson. For example, the poet and historian A. L. Rowse (1903–1997), a socialist during the interwar years, wrote the following: "One great political movement, more than any other, has the power of attracting devotion to it, and unpaid service and unquestioning loyalty like a religion; it is this power that drives the Labour Party on. … Of this movement, perhaps it is only certain groups, like the Independent Labour Party, the communists and the pacifists, who find in their politics a complete substation for religion. These people have found in it an idealism, which influences their lives and for good, a way of life more exacting, which demands above all the submergence of self and common-mindedness. What are these but characteristics of religion?" See *Politics and the Younger Generation* (London: Faber & Faber, 1931), 200. Another example comes from the opening sentence of *Forward from Liberalism* (1937) by the (at that time) communist-leaning poet and novelist Stephen Spender (1909–1995). "Religion is politics, and politics is Brotherhood," wrote William Blake. These words take us back to the time when Thomas Paine, his friend William Blake, Godwin, and later the romantics, inspired by events in France and America, believed that their political faith, interpreted in action, would overthrow kings and tyrants and make all men brothers. Politics became a religion without God, that is to say, a way of life." Later on, Spender affirmed that the "communist faith" and "communist morality" are a "way of life" but should not be referred to as a "religion" because religion possesses aims that are not realizable in this life. See Stephen Spender, *Forward from Liberalism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937), 13, 23–24. After the Second World War, Spender distanced himself from some of his more communist views of the 1930s.
49. Simon Schama, "Flaubert in the Trenches," *The New Yorker* 72, no. 6 (April 1, 1996): 97.
50. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 1–2.
51. Ibid., 2.
52. Carl Schmitt, *The Necessity of Politics* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931); introduction by Christopher Dawson, 19.
53. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 2.

54. This is in fact a new field of research today sharing common ground with the cultural history of the Great War—see James F. McMillan, "Writing the Spiritual History of the First World War," in *Religie: Godsdienst En Geweld in De Twintigste Eeuw*, ed. Madelon de Keizer (Zutphen: Walburg, 2006), 47, 49, 53.
55. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 3.
56. John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920), 249–251.
57. Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, 20–22.
58. Roy H. Schoeman, *Salvation Is from the Jews: The Role of Judaism in Salvation History from Abraham to the Second Coming* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2003), 195, 205, 207.
59. Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, 8. Burleigh cites Horst Möller, *Europa zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Munich, 1998), 122.
60. Maier, "Political Religion: A Concept and Its Limitations," 15.
61. Christopher Dawson, "The Significance of Bolshevism," in *Enquiries into Religion and Culture* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1933), 23.
62. Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century*: *1900–1933*, vol. 1 (New York: William Morrow, 1997), 446; Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 122.
63. Stone, 9.
64. Benito Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, trans. Richard Washburn Child (London: Hutchinson, 1939), 64–66, 74.
65. Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, 56–57; Gilbert, 546.
66. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 10.
67. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1 (1925), chapter 7, http://archive.org/stream/meinkampf035176mbp/meinkampf035176mbp_djvu.txt.
68. Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, 103.
69. Taylor, 163.
70. Christopher Dawson, "Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, *Tablet* (March 1939), 373.
71. Winston Churchill, "Hitler and His Choice," in *Great Contemporaries*, ed. James W. Muller (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2012), 252, 257.
72. Christopher Dawson, *The Power of the Spirit (Sword of the Spirit Pamphlet)* (London: 1943), 8–9. This obscure pamphlet is available in the British Library.
73. Ibid., 9. See also Dawson, "Hitler's *Mein Kampf*."
74. Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 282, 288.
75. The Romanian-born René Fueloep-Miller (1891–1963) published his *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus* in 1926. It was translated by

F. S. Flint and D. F. Tait as *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (1927). Fueloep-Miller wrote: "Anyone trained in the exact methods of thought of the West can see nothing in this Bolshevik materialism but one of those substitute religions which, since the decay of the earlier faith centred in the Church and the rise of scientific rationalism, have continually kept springing up to provide humanity with a new creed in place of the faith they have lost, and to satisfy their eternal yearning for freedom from all evil in new forms adapted to the scientific sprit of the present time." René Fueloep-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 71. Dawson referenced this book in his article "The New Leviathan," 96. The Russian-born Waldemar Gurian (1902–1954) published his *Der Bolschewismus*: *Einführung in Geschichte und Lehre* in 1931. It was translated into English by Dawson's friend, E. I. Watkin, as *Bolshevism: Theory and Practice* (1932). It was also translated into French, Italian, and Dutch. Dawson drew from this book in his article "The Significance of Bolshevism," referenced below. On Gurian, see Heinz Hürten, "Waldemar Gurian and the Develoment of the Concept of Totalitarianism," in *Totalitarianism and Political Religions*, ed. Hans Maier (New York: Routledge, 1996).

76. Mattei Ion Radu, "Dawson and Communism: How Much Did He Get Right?" *Political Science Reviewer*, 41, no. 2 (2017): 276–302.
77. Dawson, "The Significance of Bolshevism," 21, 26–27.
78. Ibid., 21.
79. Ibid., 24.
80. Ibid., 22.
81. Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, 105.
82. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, 51.
83. George Bernard Shaw, "Fabianism in Action," *Times*, 13 August 1931, 6. He continued: "To call them religious, and the Third International a Catholic Church, seems to them a Shavian joke, as it may seem to some of our own Catholics a Shavian blasphemy."
84. Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), I: 340, 342, 345, 348, 376.
85. Ibid., II: 807.
86. G. D. G. Cole and Margaret Cole, *A Guide to Modern Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934), 187, 189–90.
87. Richard J. Evans, "Nazism, Christianity and Political Religion: A Debate," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007): 6.
88. Emilio Gentile, "The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and

Totalitarianism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* I (2000): 29. Article translated by Robert Mallett.

89. Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, 10.
90. Melita Maschmann, "A German Teenager's Response to the Nazi Takeover in January 1933," in Robert G. Moeller, *The Nazi State and Germany Society: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 46–47. Moeller cites Maschmann's *Account Rendered: A Dossier on My Former Self*, trans. by Geoffrey Strachan (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1964), 10–12, 16.
91. Christopher Dawson, "Religion in an Age of Revolution," *Tablet* CLXVIII (October 1936): 550.
92. Gentile, "The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism," 18–19.
93. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 161.
94. Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), German theologian, historian, and sociologist; 1919–1921 member of the Prussian Landtag; friend of, and greatly admired by, Friedrich von Hügel; friend of Max Weber; and author of, for example, *Die Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (published as *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* in 1931), a book that appeared in the bibliography of Dawson's *Making of Europe* (1932) and was highly praised (and used) in Dawson, *The Judgment of the Nations*, 40–41, 44. When asked who were the most important influences on his sociological ideas, Dawson would invariably reply, "Troeltsch and Le Play"; see Scott, *A Historian and His World*, 72. Troeltsch was not a scholar Dawson directly engaged with throughout his writings; the influence was one more of overall, general perspective. For example, in *The Social Teaching*, Troeltsch begins his historical and sociological study with questions posed about his present, about the social confusion of his present day and relationship between the state and society. "What should be the attitude of the churches toward the modern social problem?" he asked; see Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon, vol. I (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 24. This beginning of study by posing questions about the present day was very much like Dawson's approach. Troeltsch's method in *The Social Teaching* was to examine the points of influence in the course of history between Christianity and the social order (family, economic life, politics, and intellectual life). Troeltsch's fundamentally historical and sociological approach to Christian teaching was an essential component of Dawson's own work.

95. The works of Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Clark Wissler, and Ruth Benedict, who were all trained by the German-born "founder of American anthropology" Franz Boas, appeared in the notes and bibliographies of Dawson's *Age of the Gods* (1928), *Progress and Religion* (1929), and *Religion and Culture* (1948). For a summary of the contribution of Boasian anthropology, see Mark W. Risjord, "Ethnography and Culture," in *Philosophy of Anthropology and Sociology*, eds. Stephen P. Turner and Mark W. Risjord (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 2007).
96. Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 3–4.
97. Durkheim, 46. Emilio Gentile writes: "'Totalitarianism' has not only an institutional significance, applicable to a system of government and a method of government, but is also indicative of a *political process* activated by a revolutionary party in order to transform the people into a harmonious collective" (emphasis in the original). See Gentile, "The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism," 21. He continued: "Modernity has not eliminated the problem of religion from the consciousness of modern man. In fact, precisely because it has been a radical, overwhelming and irreversible force for change that has swept away age-old collective beliefs and age-old, powerful institutions, modernity has created crisis and disorientation—situations which have, in turn, led to the re-emergence of the religious question, even if this has led the individual to turn not to traditional religion, but to new religions that sacralize the human" (31).
98. Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 109.
99. Gregor, 9–10.
100. Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, 94–118; Angela Astoria Kurtz, "God, Not Caesar: Revisiting National Socialism as 'Political Religion,'" *History of European Ideas* 35, no. 2 (2009): 241; Maier, "Political Religion: A Concept and Its Limitations," 7.
101. Adolf Hitler, "Anti-Semitic Speech," April 12, 1922, in Moeller, 38. Moeller cites *Hitler's Third Reich: A Documentary History*, ed. by Louis L. Snyder (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1988), 27–30.
102. Ralf Georg Reuth, *Goebbels*, trans. Krishna Winston (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 54. Reuth cites Joseph Goebbels, "Die Führerfrage," in Goebbels, *Die zweite Revolution: Briefe an Zeitgenossen* (Zwickau, 1926), 7.
103. Joseph Goebbels, "The Tasks of the Ministry for Propaganda," March 15, 1933, in Moeller, 58. Moeller cites *The Third Reich: Politics and*

Propaganda, by David Welch, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 173–175.

104. Communist Party Directive, 1923, in Robert Weinberg and Laurie Bernstein, *Revolutionary Russia: A History in Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 98–99.
105. Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism."
106. Maier, "Political Religion: A Concept and Its Limitations," 15.

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The Claims of Politics

Christopher Dawson (1939)
with notes by Joseph T. Stuart[1]

The expansion of Politics from the narrow limits of utilitarian Liberalism to the all-embracing claims of the totalitarian community-state has already had a revolutionary effect on Western civilization and may produce still greater changes in the future. It threatens to confound and destroy the traditional forms and standards of culture and to reduce it to the crude undifferentiated unity of a mass civilization. The man of letters no less than the philosopher and the religious teacher has lost his former spiritual freedom and is in danger of becoming the conscious or unconscious servant of the ruling powers whether those powers are the anonymous servants of material interests or the acknowledged leaders of a totalitarian party state.

In these circumstances our primary duty is to keep our heads clear and not to allow ourselves to be confused by the over-simplification of the issues which has always been the besetting sin of the political partisan. For though the problems that confront us are new they are not without analogies in the past. It is not the first time that there has been a conflict between the claims of politics and the claims of culture. In the first place it is important to realize the essential disparity of political phenomena. There are at least two distinct types of political interest which can be sharply differentiated. There are professional politics—the business of government—and there are ideological or spiritual politics—the spirit of loyalty to communal ideals. From one point of view politics are a profession and the politician is a specialist, like an engineer or a financier, whose function it is to transact public business in an efficient and economical manner. But from the other point of view, politics is a mystical vocation, and the politician is the man who is

conscious of a mission to save his people or who has the power to inspire men with an enthusiasm for a common ideal.

It is obvious that these two forms of political action have very little in common. A man may be an admirable chairman of committees and yet be quite incapable of making men willing to die for the policy that he favours, while the man who is able to fill his followers with an invincible faith in their common cause, may be entirely incompetent when it comes to practical politics.

It seems to me that a great part of our difficulties is due to the confusion and contamination of these two types of political psychology and political action. For though it is easy to distinguish them in theory, they inevitably tend to overlap in practice. The great statesmen and political leaders—Cromwell, Abraham Lincoln, and the rest—have always been the men who are able to combine both functions, to be at once the personal embodiment of communal ideals and the practical organizers of public affairs; in much the same way as the great churchmen have been those who managed to unite the essentially dissimilar functions of the ecclesiastical administrator and the religious teacher.

Moreover this duality of political life is not confined to the professional politician; it is no less apparent in the life of the ordinary man. The latter has to fulfill the practical duties of citizenship. He has to take his part in the business of local government, to vote in elections, to sit on councils and committees and to undertake his share of public burdens. But he also has duties towards the community of a wider and more spiritual kind. These are the virtues of patriotism and devotion to the common good which need not express themselves through any of the recognized channels of administrative activity but which are nevertheless the very essence of citizenship. But though these are political virtues, they also transcend politics, since they are directed towards a community which is wider and deeper than the state. Our conception of the community depends on our ideology. If we are liberals, it is Humanity, if we are conservatives it is the Nation, if we are communists, it is the World Proletariat, if we are Fascists it is the Race. But so far as I know, there is no creed or ideology which makes the state the final

social end and excludes the concept of a wider community to which our deepest loyalty is due.

It is in this sphere that the main responsibilities of the thinker and the man of letters are to be found. Practical politics are the concern of the practical man, and the business man may be better equipped than the philosopher and the poet to take part in the transaction of public business. But when it comes to the consideration of the final ends of political action, to the criticism of the ideologies on which the action is based and to the creation of a social consciousness and sense of responsibility which transcend the limits of the political community, it is clear that the thinker and the writer have a more important contribution to make than the man of action or the political orator; and it is their primary function to serve society with intellectual integrity in this sphere rather than to take an active part in party politics or in the actual work of government.

This principle is far from being generally admitted at the present day. The individualism of nineteenth-century culture had already effaced the old frontiers between the spiritual and temporal powers and weakened the traditional hierarchy of social and spiritual values, and now the coming of the totalitarian state marks the emergence of a new type of politics which recognizes no limits and seeks to subordinate every social and intellectual activity to its own ends. Thus the new politics are in a sense more idealistic than the old; they are political religions based on a Messianic hope of social salvation. But at the same time they are more realist since they actually involve a brutal struggle for life between rival powers which are prepared to use every kind of treachery and violence to gain their ends.

It is easy to condemn the dictators and the politicians for thus opening the gates to the flood of evil and violence which threatens to overwhelm our civilization. But the primary responsibility does not rest with them: it rests on the intellectuals who prepared the way for them by their theoretic justification of violence and terrorism. It was the Communists who first popularized the new political theory and technique and the Communists in Russia were par

excellence the party of the intelligentsia. And on the other side, it was men of letters like Nietzsche and Sorel,[2] Marinetti[3] and D'Annunzio[4] who were the spiritual fathers of Fascism and whose influence transformed a national movement against defeatism and social disorder into a totalitarian cult of the will to power.

If the intellectuals abandon the interests of culture and cease to recognize the primacy of spiritual values, we can hardly expect the politician to do otherwise. Setting aside political Messianism and the exaggerations of totalitarian ideologies, the task of the modern statesman is quite important enough to occupy his whole attention. He is responsible for the safety of the state—*salus reipublicae*—and we cannot blame him for subordinating everything else to that vital task, any more than we can blame a ship's captain for putting the safety of his vessel before the interests of his passengers. But the state, like the ship, is a means and not an end and though the public interests with which the statesman is charged are vital to the existence of the community, they are not its only interests or even its highest interests. The intellectual, on the other hand, is the servant of those wider interests which transcend the sphere of politics. He works not merely for the state but for the community of thought which extends far beyond the limits of any single political society.

The trouble is that this conception of a community of thought has never received adequate treatment from modern social theorists. Either it has been rationalized by the philosophers into a universal ideal which has no sociological content or it has been regarded as the ideological aspect of the political and economic society which is the ultimate reality. But any serious historian, and most of all the historian of literature, must realize that there is a community of thought, which, no less than the political society, is the result of historical development, but which has its own laws of growth that are not limited by political or even racial frontiers. For example, mediaeval Christendom and mediaeval China formed two distinct and independent communities of thought and the fact that the Mongol Empire united Russia and China in one political system did little or nothing to bind these two spiritual worlds together. On the other hand, modern Europe and modern America

do not form two separate communities of thought in spite of their differences of culture and their political independence. English and American literature are mutually dependent, and religious and intellectual movements which have their origin on one side of the Atlantic may have as much influence on the other side of the ocean as in the land of their origin.

If this is so, it is clear that the social responsibilities of the man of letters cannot be identified with his duty as a citizen or subordinated to the interests of the state of which he is a member. He is bound to think of the interests of culture as a whole and to direct his activities in whatever direction he can serve them best. This does not mean that literature must be denationalized or cosmopolitan, for the nationalism of a literature is a different thing from political nationalism. Indeed the periods when a literature gives fullest expression to the national spirit and tradition are those in which its international influence is greatest.

At the present time it seems to me of the first importance that literature should recognize that it has national and international responsibilities quite distinct from those of politics. There is an obvious political conflict between the Western powers and the states of the Axis, but there is no such conflict between their literatures. French and Italian literature are not democratic and fascist literature, they are just French and Italian literature, and though the political conflict will normally find some literary expression it will not involve any fundamental opposition between the two. In fact while the political systems are mutually exclusive, the literatures both belong to a common tradition of culture which transcends politics and, to some extent, even nationality.

But this ancient European tradition is threated today by a new barbarism more formidable than anything in the past since it possesses an infinitely stronger technical and scientific equipment. I am not referring to any particular political sate or régime, but to the general tendency to social mechanism which treats science, literature and culture as nothing more than instruments in the struggle for power. The claim of politics to organize the state as a mass community is fatal to the old ideals of culture. If it could be completely realized it would mean the end of thought and the end

of history. Human society might thus attain a higher degree of unity than it has ever possessed in the past, but it would be a soulless unity, like that of the societies of the insect world. In such a society there would be no room for criticism or personality or any free spiritual activity and without these things it is difficult to see how literature could continue to exist.

Endnotes

1. Christopher Dawson, "The Claims of Politics," *Scrutiny* VIII, no. 2 (1939). Reprinted with the permission of Julian Scott. *Scrutiny* was a British journal of literary criticism edited by F. R. Leavis that lasted from 1932 to 1953. See also an earlier volume of this journal for a previously unpublished lecture by Dawson called "Conservatism," *The Political Science Reviewer* XXXIX (2010): 232–262.
2. Georges Eugène Sorel (1847–1922) was a French philosopher and theorist of revolutionary syndicalism. His notion of the power of myth in people's lives inspired Marxists and fascists. Born in Cherbourg, France, Sorel worked as an engineer for years before completely devoting himself to study and writing. His 1908 book *Réflexions sur la violence* argued that the success of the proletariat class depended on violent revolution. Sorel was influenced by Alexis de Tocqueville, Proudhon, Nietzsche, Marx, and others.
3. Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti (1876–1944) was an Italian poet and editor, the founder of the Futurist movement, and a fascist ideologue. He lived and studied in Egypt and France, was trained as a lawyer, and decided to devote his life to literary pursuits. His *Futurist Manifesto* (1909) initiated an artistic philosophy, Futurism, which was a rejection of the past and a celebration of speed, machinery, violence, youth, and industry. Marinetti became an active supporter of Benito Mussolini.
4. Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938) was an Italian poet, journalist, novelist, and dramatist who influenced the Italian fascist movement. Born to the wealthy mayor of Abruzzo, D'Annunzio studied at University of Rome La Sapienza. He invented much of the ritual (balcony speeches, the Roman salute, the use of religious symbols in a secular setting) later used by his rival Mussolini during his (D'Annunzio's) occupation of Fiume and his leadership of the Italian Regency of Carnaro from 1919 to 1920. Despite their great differences, both he and Mussolini "attempted to transform their countrymen into more heroic types, rejecting the Italian tradition of civility in favor of an ethic of violence and imperialism." See Michael A. Ledeen, *The First Duce: D'Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), viii.

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The Bible, the Founders, and Christian America

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Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers. By Daniel L. Dreisbach. Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. viii, 331. $34.95 (hc)

Faith and the Founders of the American Republic. Edited by Daniel L. Dreisbach and Mark David Hall. Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. x, 366. $44.95 (pb) $115.00 (hc)

For at least eight decades, a story of doubtful veracity has circulated wherein a New Orleans lawyer acerbically responds to a legal query from a New York law firm (or the Federal Housing Authority, depending on the version). The attorney is asked to trace ownership of a piece of nearby land beyond the last known title from 1803 and responds with a history of Louisiana: it was purchased from France, who acquired it from Spain, who secured it by Columbus's exploration, which was underwritten by Isabella and Ferdinand, who were empowered by the Pope. Because the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, and Christ is the Son of God, God is therefore the original owner of Louisiana. The joke is funnier in writing, especially when typed up as a faux letter, and this reviewer is old enough to recall when such anecdotes were passed via the more laborious mimeographed sheets rather that effortlessly through email.

While the method of circulating such stories has changed, their motive has not. Questions of identity usually come down to questions of history and, more specifically, founding persons and events.

In the midst of our culture wars, Americans debate the character of their nation's origin. In this light, we may ask: what precisely is owed to religion, specifically to Christianity and the Bible? Can one even say that America was founded as a "Christian nation?"

Authors on both sides of the question have typically responded by providing intellectual biographies of key American "founders." The argument is implicit in the genre: Insofar as various influential founders are "believers" or not, then it follows that the country they founded reflected their beliefs. To the degree that the founders were *not* orthodox believers, then it would be wrong to suppose that their project was in any way "Christian." America would then reflect the skepticism of the eighteenth century and the "Enlightenment" more generally – including that movement's rejection of both revealed religion and any close partnership of church and state. Despite some evident methodological and logical shortcomings in this reasoning, many authors continue to focus on the personal religious opinions of the "founders."

For example, Kerry Walters's *Revolutionary Deists: Early America's Rational Infidels* picks the low-hanging fruit to make the case for a Deistic Founding led by first-rank founders Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine (the greatest polemicist of the Revolution). They also include "minor" figures like Ethan Allen, Elihu Palmer and Philip Freneau (called the poet of the Revolution). Matthew Stewart's *Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic* likewise asserts a heterodox character for the Revolution and Founding but offers a more robust thesis: America's philosophical origins are rooted in the skepticism of Epicurus and traceable through Spinoza and Locke to the opinions of founders like Franklin and Jefferson. Like Walters, Stewart emphasizes Ethan Allen. He also rescues from obscurity Dr. Thomas Young, a prominent Boston patriot and John Adams's family physician, who was indicted for blasphemy.

A less radical alternative to the Deistic Founding is a middle ground of lukewarm and heterodox theism. This more inclusive approach emphasizes the common eighteenth century belief in divine providence and divine judgment but still makes rationalism

preeminent. According to its most recent proponent, political theorist Gregg Frazer, "theistic rationalism" is a more appropriate label not only for Jefferson or Franklin but also John Adams, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and lesser-known founders James Wilson and Gouverneur Morris. Frazer's compromise, though more persuasive in its broad strokes, still insists on the binary logic of an older macro-level intellectual history: the founders were either disciples of Christ or disciples of the "Enlightenment." Not only is this ham-fisted, there remains the questionable presumption that a particular founder's ecclesiastical or theological predilections have relevance for his political thought.

An even subtler argument against Christian America has been offered by historians Mark Noll (*America's God* and *In the Beginning Was the Word*), John Fea (*Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction*) and Steven K. Green (*Inventing a Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding*). Like Frazer, they deploy vague and broad categories such as "the Enlightenment" or "Whiggism" as implicitly exclusive of Christian political thought. But to their credit, however, they do try to determine precisely what *Christian* political thought might be. For Noll, the answer lies in a dichotomy between the supposedly "biblicist" Protestant Reformers, Puritans, revivalists of the Great Awakening, and the more secular-minded leaders of the Revolution and Founding. Whereas biblicists supposedly derived their social and political thought from the Bible, the American revolutionaries and founders presumably did not. Noll's ideal biblicist not only roots his prescriptions explicitly in scripture, but he does so *exclusive* of secular arguments. Such reasoning is supposedly an extension of the biblicist's belief in the inerrancy of scripture.

That sounds appealing enough – so long as one does not look carefully at the actual political thought of Noll's ideal biblicists. Very few of the Puritans, magisterial Reformers, or revivalists argued political ideas *exclusively* from scripture. It is arguable whether prominent Protestant political prescriptions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were even argued *primarily*

from scripture. The conclusions drawn from this dubious "before and after" approach can be quite startling. For example, Fea, Frazer, and Noll all discount the Christian bona fides of founder John Witherspoon because he taught natural theology. That might seem plausible only if one knows nothing about Protestant precedent and insists on seeing one's subjects using the dichotomies of early twentieth century historiography or Straussian political theory. To those who know something about the role of reason and natural theology in Reformed theology generally, and about Reformed scholasticism in particular, this casting of Witherspoon is ridiculous.

Fea and Green draw even more embarrassing conclusions. For example, Fea presupposes that commercial motives for settlement are self-evidently unchristian. One flippantly wonders if Fea has an equally Puritan criticism of "prayer book worship." A more sober question might be whether Fea has read the Virginia charters or the personal spiritual reflections of its founders? Fea likewise judges American resistance and revolution to be necessarily unchristian – despite the long history of Protestants advocating both resistance and revolution (using both sacred and secular sources) for *two centuries before the Stamp Act*. Were John Ponet or John Knox therefore part of the Enlightenment? Were they Whigs? Both Fea and Green even assert that religious establishment is unchristian. While almost all contemporary American Christians have accepted this revisionist argument invented by seventeenth-century American colonists who had to abandon some kind of establishment or else wanted to advance it, the association possess one notable flaw: if modern religious freedom is self-evidently Christian and Biblical, much of Christendom becomes necessarily unchristian and unbiblical!

One of the main problems with this continued insistence on binary analysis, whether subtler or ham-fisted, is that theological orthodoxy is presumed to advance the Bible's role in political thought while heterodoxy is presumed to neutralize, undermine, or oppose it. To the contrary, however, one can respect the wisdom or historical value of the Bible while demurring on theological

dogma or doctrine. Many seminal authors rooted significant elements of their political thinking in scripture though they themselves were heterodox (e.g. Locke, Grotius, Sidney, Milton, Harrington). The arguments of Noll, Fea, and Green simply do not comprehend with any nuance the interplay of secular and sacred sources in political arguments over three centuries. They implicitly or explicitly dismiss the use of scripture if the user deviates from traditional Protestant orthodoxy. Such sharp dichotomies and hermetically sealed categories of political thinking exist only in the minds of modern scholars. They did not exist in the minds of their subjects.

A far more inclusive and appropriate approach to early America was introduced by Carl Richard's *The Founders and the Bible*. Richard rightly states that to call all the founders "Christian" would hold true only if one adopted an "uncommonly broad definition of Christianity." Some did hold such a broad definition, of course. Jefferson, for example, declared in an 1860 letter to William Short that "Jesus did not mean to impose himself on mankind as the son of God." Despite such obvious departure from confessional or creedal Christianity, however, Richard argues that it would be likewise incorrect to characterize the founders as "twentieth-century secularists." Rather than separate the wheat from the chaff, Richard simply collects statements made by a broad range of founders and presents them thematically without much commentary or argument. He is agnostic on "Christian America" apart from his rejecting "Deism" as influential. To wit, too many of the Founders believed in divine intervention and (even in the case of Franklin or Jefferson) the efficacy of prayer to be considered Deists. Letting the founders speak for themselves and reveal the variety of their religious opinions leads one to the conclusion that most of them had a deep respect for the wisdom of the Bible, and a similar appreciation for Christianity – even if only as a means to salutary political or social ends and not as the only route to heaven.

Daniel Dreisbach's *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers* (2017) shares Richard's irenic approach. Dreisbach,

Professor of Justice, Law, and Society at American University, begins from the premise that while volume upon volume has been devoted to political theorists such as Locke or Montesquieu, and also to their influence on the American Revolution and Founding, considerably less attention has been paid to the influence of the Bible. Dreisbach intends to remedy that oversight.

Dreisbach makes two strategic moves in his monograph. First, he does not attempt focused spiritual or religious biographies of his subjects; he also makes no claim that any one was more significant than another – thus blunting arguments about how such-and-such pious founder (e.g. Patrick Henry) was more influential than such-and-such skeptical founder (e.g. Ethan Allen). Dreisbach goes even further to explain that he uses the term "founding fathers" or "founders" to denote *not particular persons* but rather "an entire generation or two of Americans from many walks of life who, in the last half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century articulated the rights of colonists, secured independence from Great Britain, and established new constitutional republics at both the national and state levels."[1] Asserting such an enormous data set is a brilliant rhetorical strategy to avoid talking about "the interior faith commitments" of particular persons, and also frees Dreisbach from making precise claims about unity or disunity among "the founders" as a group.[2] That said, the assertion is somewhat disingenuous. There is no effort to systematically assess the aggregate opinions of an entire generation (nor could one hope to do so). More importantly, there is almost nothing about "many walks of life" if one implies from that a diversity of race or status. Dreisbach's subjects are largely the same persons that populate most studies of the Founding and religion – prominent statesmen whose social and economic class distinguished and empowered them for political influence, and ministers from established denominations who preached political sermons. Nevertheless, Dreisbach's moderate ambitions are evident and appreciated. He seeks only to illustrate that the Bible was prominent in political discourse, that it was both respected and referenced in prominent political conversations, and that it had significant influence in public culture (i.e., letters, law,

and education). Like Richard, Dreisbach is agnostic on the question of "Christian America."

The second prudent move by Dreisbach is to assert that use of the Bible in political thinking is not exclusive of other sources (e.g., republicanism, liberalism, or classical antiquity) in political thought. Though Dreisbach does not explain why we ought to refuse the "zero-sum game" approach, the reasons should be evident enough. As stated above, the founding generation rarely saw *political thinking* in the dichotomous terms of Noll or Frazer. (Doctrinal or ecclesiastical questions, of course, might be seen in such exclusive terms.) Furthermore, a zero-sum approach presupposes a coherence and comprehensive character for "biblical" political thought and for its supposed competitors (e.g., classical or civic republicanism, Whiggism, Scottish or English Enlightenment, or British constitutionalism). Neither were hermetically sealed off from one another.

Presuming such dichotomies in the history of political thought actually cause Noll, Fea, or Frazer to resemble the "worldview" approach so popular among evangelical Christians today – the very group whom they oppose for defending "Christian America." In fact, the Christian tradition has a long and diverse history of political thought. Since the time of the Church Fathers, the sources relevant for answering political questions, whether in church, or state, or in the relationship of the two, have never been simply "either secular or sacred" A more generous "both-and" approach existed, particularly after Constantine.

Do these strategic moves by Dreisbach mean that his book therefore becomes more of a chronicle than an argument? Yes, but the accretion of so many layers of questionable interpretation makes Dreisbach's (and Richard's) more straightforward history quite welcome. That said, it would be incorrect to characterize Dreisbach's book as *mere chronicle*. Dreisbach has a recurring exercise in the book which I believe to be implicitly but pointedly directed at those such as Noll or Fea who have argued that the Bible was co-opted for political expediency. Dreisbach deploys both "basic biblical scholarship and political theory" to determine whether or not a text

was used consistent with its biblical context.[3] If they were, this undermines the idea that the Bible was leveraged insincerely.

The first part of *Reading the Bible with the Founders* provides an overview of how the Bible influenced culture: public culture, the more private culture of the "founding fathers," and political discourse more specifically. Here Dreisbach takes a route also taken by Noll in *In the Beginning Was the Word*, providing a summary of the cultural impact of the Protestant Reformation. Familiar contributions include the vast expansion of public literacy encouraged by a vernacular Bible. Dreisbach also briefly mentions relatively overlooked contributions such as the way in which the English Bible not only shaped the English language but also English nationalism. When one considers the ubiquitous character of the Bible in American homes, Dreisbach's point becomes almost self-evident: when boys and girls learn to read by using the Bible at home, school, and church, it not only shapes their discourse but grinds the lenses though which they see the world.

Dreisbach emphasizes, however, that there was not universal agreement on the Bible's use in schools. Jefferson, echoing Locke, felt that immature and untutored minds might misunderstand scripture. Of course, part of Jefferson's motivation was no doubt his preference for the moral over the metaphysical. Jefferson's motives came under withering fire from pious opponents during his presidential candidacy in 1800. William Linn (former chaplain to the US House of Representatives), for example, asked how children could be expected to have the "first elements of morality" if they did not possess the "first elements of religion" as their foundation.[4] Insofar as republicanism presupposed virtuous popular character, such questions were imperative. Jefferson also had concerns about religious liberty and toleration. He expressed a concern shortly before his death that Jewish youth should not be constrained to "a course of theological reading which their consciences do not permit them to pursue."[5] Jefferson was definitely in the minority on this question, however; Noah Webster famously advanced the use of the Bible in schools (though only after a religious conversion), as did Benjamin Rush and Fisher Ames, for example.

As for the Bible's influence in the lives of the founders themselves, Dreisbach offers little that is new, though he does rightly emphasize that "no generation of American statesmen was more theologically informed than the founding generation."[6] Theology was deliberately taught in undergraduate curricula. ("Mr. Jefferson's University" would break that mold by not hiring a professor of divinity.) Many prominent statesmen were privately tutored as schoolchildren by clergy. As children and as adults, they sat under preaching throughout the year. Though not tutored by ministers as a child, George Washington's sitting through countless Anglican worship services steeped him in the scriptural language of the Book of Common Prayer. Many founders could read the biblical languages and some formally studied theology. Some wrote their own translations, commentaries, or promoted the printing and distribution of Bibles. Even Jefferson's two private compilations of extracts from the Gospels (including not only "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth" but also "The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth"), while heterodox and even scandalous, testifies to his respect for the Bible – albeit not for the ends promoted by his more pious contemporaries. In this section of the book, Dreisbach introduces another category of founders to whom he devotes considerable attention – ministers who participated in political discourse through the publication of sermons or pamphlets.

When addressing the Bible's role in political discourse in the concluding section of Part One, Dreisbach provides a comprehensive list of the Bible's diverse uses: to enrich common language; to enhance the power of one's rhetoric (e.g., Patrick Henry's famous "Give me liberty or give me death" speech); to define standards (e.g., casting the Hebrew commonwealth as a model republic or promoting a public fast); to illuminate the role of providence (i.e., assigning a divine hue or authoritative interpretation to events); or asserting the designs of God (Franklin's call for prayer at the Constitutional Convention, for example).

In Part Two, Dreisbach delivers on his promise to demonstrate whether or not the Bible was taken out of context for political

expediency. He chooses verses (e.g., Proverbs 14:34, Proverbs 23:2, Micah 4:4, and Micah 6:8) that were prominent in a variety of texts and contexts, from the more private (personal correspondence) to the public (the Liberty Bell). Notable details here include Paine inserting "making our fellow creatures happy" for "walk humbly with thy God" in Micah 6:8 and George Washington replacing "God" with a more direct reference to Jesus as the "Divine Author of our blessed Religion." There is also an entertaining excursus on the possibility that Benjamin Franklin's motion to begin Constitutional Convention sessions with prayer was, in fact, adopted by the august body. (All but one account of the convention insist that it was not adopted.) Perhaps most notable is how Dreisbach's exegesis of Proverbs 14:34 makes it difficult to assign the label of Deism to much of anything in the Founding. He also demonstrates how Washington's use of Micah 4:4 ("under his own vine and fig tree") over four dozen times demonstrates a variety of applications for the verse. The phrase not only implied prosperity but also safety and freedom of religion.

Dreisbach also provides an antidote to Noll and Fea's attack on the "Christian" character of the American Revolution by summarizing the Protestant precedent of resistance and revolution. While Dreisbach cannot be expected to provide a comprehensive summary of two centuries of political thinking, a few shortcomings are evident. Notably, Dreisbach makes the common error of focusing on Luther and Calvin, neither of whom were necessarily representative of the broader political thinking in the Lutheran or Reformed traditions respectively, particularly their earlier work on resistance or revolution. He also asserts that the English Reformation was a product of Henry VIII's dispute with Rome over his divorce, which ignores the deep interest in budding Protestant theology among Thomas Cranmer and other leaders of the Anglican church. Dreisbach more than makes up for this, however, with a long explication of the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* – though the attempt to trace lines from it to Locke involve some very questionable secondary sources. Likewise, though Samuel Rutherford's *Lex, Rex* is a commonly cited work in Reformed political thought,

and Dreisbach examines its important arguments, its influence in America is entirely speculative. However, the real value of texts such as Rutherford's is to emphasize that Romans 13:1-7 was not understood by Protestants (especially Reformed Protestants) to be a text prescribing unconditional obedience to civil authorities. Recognizing that fact makes Jonathan Mayhew's 1750 exegesis of Romans 13 (arguably the most famous sermon of the Revolution, though preached 25 years before the first shot was fired), much less revolutionary in condoning revolution.

Dreisbach devotes special attention to the question of how the biblical or spiritual understanding of "liberty," especially as used in Galatians 5:1, was or was not cynically misused by patriots for political expediency – a charge levelled by Noll, Fea, and Frazer at revolutionaries. Dreisbach emphasizes that the rebellious colonists themselves were sensitive to this charge – their contemporary opponents leveled it against them too, of course. Dreisbach writes, "Many patriotic polemicists candidly acknowledged that they were appropriating biblical rhetoric about spiritual or *Christian* liberty to champion the cause of civil or *political* liberty, but they argued that biblical conceptions of liberty were sufficiently expansive to encompass or apply to the political liberty to which they aspired."[7] Dreisbach then demonstrates from the words of various ministers how they responded to the charge of misappropriation with precisely this defense.

The great virtue of *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers* is found partly in what it says implicitly and partly in what it refuses to say. Dreisbach is implicitly arguing against multiple sets of opponents. He is pushing back against those who have overemphasized secular sources, those who have presumed that heterodoxy excludes biblical influence, as well as those who have insisted that a "Christian" Founding excludes secular sources in political reasoning. Dreisbach's recounting of the influence of the Bible in early America is irenic and appealing. He is not interested in smugly planting a flag for "Christian America." He understands his subjects as they understood themselves, and he does not impose on them the errant prejudices of contemporary scholarship.

A more detailed and biographical approach informs the collection of essays found in *Faith and the Founders of the American Republic* (2014). Edited by Dreisbach and Mark David Hall, Herbert Hoover Distinguished Professor at George Fox University, the book is divided into two parts. The first part ambitiously explores more popular generalities: "the Founders and _____" (e.g. Deism, Judaism, Reformed Protestantism, Islam, Race). While the Introduction discourages our continual attention to "famous founders" (e.g. Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison) and encourages us to revisit "forgotten founders," there is plenty of attention paid to the *famous* founders in the first part of the collection. Only in the second part of the book are we turned toward the comparatively "forgotten founders" (Gouverneur Morris, John Hancock, Elias Boudinot, John Dickinson, Isaac Backus, John Leland) as case studies in religion and politics.

Darren Staloff launches the first part of the book with a contrarian essay on the contested role of Deism. Deism's influence is roundly dismissed in this collection on the aforementioned reasoning that relatively few founders (or Americans generally) rejected the efficacy of prayer or providence. Indeed, Staloff disqualifies Hamilton, Franklin, Madison, Washington, Jefferson, and John Adams from being labeled as deists but does emphasize how Deism was a source of gripping fear for many Americans at this time – particularly in Federalist New England. Unlike British Deism, however, American Deism was relatively friendly to Christianity. Notable exceptions include the hostility of Elihu Palmer or Tom Paine toward Christianity – the latter's being more ironic since Paine had "preached" the greatest Bible-based sermon of the Revolution, *Common Sense*.

Likewise, Staloff distinguishes between the American Enlightenment and the European Enlightenment. Whereas the European Enlightenment was hostile to Christianity, the American Enlightenment was more agreeable to Christianity. This agreeable character was reciprocal: American Protestants were more agreeable to their domestic version of the Enlightenment than European Christians were to theirs. Staloff characterizes religion in the

Founding as a blended disunity, one that accommodated even the *rare* American Deist. So while Staloff has blunted one challenge to the "Christian Founding" by denying the prevalence of American Deism, he has invited a different challenge by suggesting that American Protestantism accommodated the American Enlightenment. Scholars generally presume a great gulf to exist between those movements mainly because they do not distinguish an American from a European Enlightenment. Staloff's suggestion implies significant compromise on the part of both the American Enlightenment and American Protestantism; one wishes that he provided more than two breezy pages at the conclusion to sustain this argument.

Mark David Hall's own contribution summarizes what he calls the influence of the Reformed (or, more popularly, "Calvinist") tradition in America. Like Dreisbach, Hall takes cues from Sydney Ahlstrom, and asserts the dominance of Reformed Protestant theology at the time of the Revolution. Hall emphasizes the tradition's influence: prolific and popular Congregational, Presbyterian and Baptist churches, the ubiquitous *New England Primer*, the significance of John Witherspoon, the prevalence of ecclesiastical and civil covenanting, the availability of works of Reformed political theology, the founders' own study or citation of those texts, and the Reformed upbringing of many forgotten founders. In general terms, all of this cannot be contested. Most American Protestants were not in the Lutheran, "radical" (Anabaptist or Quaker), or pietistic traditions. Anglicans were Reformed insofar as the first generation of continental reformers influenced both the Edwardian and Elizabethan Churches, though Puritan dissent and nonconformity in the Caroline or Restoration Churches was intended to cast doubt on the Protestant bona fides of Anglicanism.

Theology is only prelude for politics, however, and Hall's intention is to demonstrate that there is a particular set of Reformed *political ideas* that influenced America's founders. It is this question of "influence," particularly Hall's brief reading of the Declaration, Constitution, and First Amendment, that proves to be his most significant but equally controversial argument. However

inconclusive the Reformed influence is on such famous documents, however, Hall has supplied a preliminary rebuttal to secular explanations of Revolutionary and Founding political theories – particularly among forgotten founders and ordinary colonists.

David Dalin and Thomas Kidd provide chapters on the founders' relationship to Judaism and Islam respectively. Dalin focuses on famous founders and their particular opinions of Jews and Judaism. Not surprisingly, we learn that their opinions were largely respectful, consistent with both American curiosity and pious regard for Jews as Old Testament believers. Dalin's summary is a helpful introduction, but doesn't provide much beyond the more famous founders. Dalin's is not the last word on the founders and Judaism in this volume, however. Other contributors (notably Dreisbach) note founders' fondness for the Old Testament and its so-called "Hebrew republic."

Kidd's exploration of American opinions of Islam is much richer than Dalin's, demonstrating how Muslims largely served as symbols of tyranny. Almost all Muslims in America were in slave populations, and Americans characterized Muslims as foreign pirates or despots and yoked them with equally feared Roman Catholic rulers. Islam was a political stereotype leveraged for opposing legal measures (e.g. "the absence of a religious test will enable Muslim magistrates in America"), satirizing one's opponent (e.g. "Muslims hate abolition, too"), or scoring a rhetorical point (e.g. "Muslim slaveholders are kinder than Southern slaveholders"). Kidd wittily opines, "Although one should hesitate to describe early Americans as conversant with Islam, they certainly conversed about Islam regularly."[8]

Subsequent chapters consider religion's role within particular political factions. Robert Calhoon and Ruma Chopra explore Loyalist arguments and Donald Drakeman examines Antifederalist writings. Calhoon and Chopra remind us that religious arguments were not confined to Patriot writings, nor were Patriots the only ones who believed a particular regime to be prescribed by the Bible. In addition to a helpful but familiar sketch of the various Anglican positions against Independence, Calhoon and Chopra

also explain the complicated position of Lutherans, Methodists, Quakers, and Moravians in the Revolution. Drakeman demonstrates that discerning religious motivations among the opponents of constitutional ratification is complicated at best. In terms of overt references, Antifederalists said very little about religion. On matters of church and state, their prescriptions are difficult to infer. This is not surprising, given the multitude of state ratification debates, the strategic maneuvering involved in those debates, and the simple fact that any amendment of specific rights (including prevention of religious establishment) applied only to the *federal or national government*. (There was not yet any incorporation doctrine, of course.) Hence, to oppose *national establishment* did not necessarily imply a desire for disestablishment at the state level.

Dreisbach's chapter, covering some of the same ground as his 2017 book, argues mainly against historians and political scientists who insist that references to Scripture or Christian themes are "conspicuously absent in the political discussions." He cites again, for example, Benjamin Franklin telling Samuel Cooper that Franklin's European audience simply did not recognize Biblical references unless prompted by specific citation. This ignorance, Dreisbach argues, afflicts modern scholars as well. As in his book, Dreisbach chronicles familiarity from childhood, the prolific "Bible projects," the weaving of Biblical language into ordinary discourse, citation of the Bible in political pamphlets. In this chapter, as in his book, one is still left to wonder what the *particular influence* of the Bible was. The social scientist longs to isolate the variable of the Bible in the Founding. If the Bible had not influenced the founders, particularly as a text with unique authority, what would have been lost or gained?

Part I concludes with a presentation of religion's role in discussions of race. Jonathan Sassi provides an ambitious timeline of race relations for those whom Jefferson categorized as "white, red, and black." Sassi's chapter is one of the most successful in shifting our focus away from the famous founders, and he provides a rich and broad social history. He demonstrates the schizophrenic character

of race relations, including the racial pride of American Indians who (like all human "tribes") wavered between cruel triumphalism and charitable coexistence. As for whites, both religion *and science* were to blame for either peaceful or antagonistic relations between whites and the American Indians. Hostility actually decreased thanks to both the Great Awakening and to Enlightenment notions of environmental psychological determinism. Just when peaceful coexistence seemed possible, however, the Revolution formed new racial battle lines and revived debates about the status of both blacks and Native Americans in the new nation.

Part Two of *Faith and the Founders* turns to the aforementioned "forgotten founders." It begins with an essay by Gregg Frazer that summarizes his argument about "theistic rationalists" and applies it to the case of Gouverneur Morris. Frazer argues that such founders were "theistic" insofar as they respected a personal and benevolent God to whom one could pray. But they were "rationalists" insofar as natural religion was held as superior to dogmatic or confessional Protestant Christianity. God-endowed reason was presumed to undermine doctrines or events that appeared irrational. Pious duty consisted mainly in public morality rather than doctrinal purity or scrupulous private conduct. Not surprisingly, Morris supported toleration, despised Calvinism, and appeared ambiguous about miracles. While he devoted himself to public service, he flouted modesty in his private conduct. On this last point, of course, one cannot conclude from Morris's case that theistic rationalism *condoned* immodest private conduct.

The essay by Gray Scott Smith which follows offers the notable contrast of John Hancock, who evidently lived a more devout life. Hancock was quick to appeal to biblical arguments and providentialist language, used his office as Massachusetts governor to advance faithful public observance, and served as a prominent philanthropist who led by Christian example. Where Smith's essay falters is in its speculation that Hancock's pastor, Samuel Cooper, defined Hancock's opinions of the virtue of wealth. His only support for this comes from Charles Akers, author of the only modern biography of Cooper. While Akers's biography of Cooper

is outstanding in many respects, it errs in overemphasizing one early sermon wherein Cooper advanced wealth as a divinely sanctioned expression of natural self-love. This reviewer has read through Cooper's published sermons and existing 178 manuscripts at the Huntington Library and New York Public Library. One looks in vain to find evidence that Cooper was a diligent apologist for wealth accumulation and thus a pious tool for his wealthy Brattle Street congregation. Akers wants Cooper to be that tool, but the evidence is just not there in Cooper's manuscripts, or anywhere else for that matter. Smith overreaches by recycling the unsupportable assertion of Cooper's modern biographer.

By contrast, Jonathan Den Hartog's exemplary biography of Elias Boudinot eschews reliance on the one modern biography of Boudinot and instead does the heavy lifting of archival research. The result is an insightful sketch of Boudinot as an example of Reformed Protestant participation in America's early politics. Like many "minor" founders, Boudinot possessed an impressive resume: delegate to the Congress of the Confederation, a US Congressman from New Jersey, director of the US Mint, and appointed positions now long forgotten. Den Hartog emphasizes his religious pedigree: he penned a refutation of Paine's *Age of Reason*, a biography of William Tennent, and a work on prophecy. Boudinot was also instrumental in the creation of the American Bible Society. As president of the Confederation's Congress, Boudinot continued the tradition of official declarations recognizing divine benevolence for the nation – a tradition then maintained by Washington and Adams as the first post-Constitution presidents. Boudinot also advocated abolition even if it led to secession. He also tied divine favor to particular policy. For example, he suggested that Federalist policies were God's own and continued to favor religious establishment. When it became evident to Boudinot that he was on the wrong side of such issues, however, he turned from politics to individual and local expressions of righteousness.

Jane Calvert's essay on John Dickinson returns us to the first rank of founders, and it is lamentable that Dickinson has never been given his due. Dickinson wrote *Letters from a Farmer in*

Pennsylvania – a work whose influence is second only to *Common Sense*. He served as a delegate in every formative gathering from the Stamp Act Congress to the Constitutional Convention and helped write the Articles of Confederation. Dickinson was also the only founding father between 1776 and 1786 to free his slaves. Though Dickinson served in the militia during the war, he opposed independence as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, and declined to vote on the Declaration of Independence. Though perhaps the most important founder until 1776, Dickinson's hesitation to support independence undermined his legacy almost immediately. Historians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries subsequently wrestled with whether Dickinson's Quaker faith played a role in his politics. Calvert argues that Dickinson advanced a "Quaker constitutionalism" that lay somewhere between the Whig revolutionary and the Tory loyalist. With the exception of a few lines about "invented mechanisms" for amending a constitution, however, Calvert does not demonstrate persuasively how Dickinson's constitutionalism is attributable to his Quakerism. Could not Dickinson's moderation just as likely be owed to his admirable prudence, distrust of reason over experience, and legal training at the Inns of Court? What Calvert more persuasively connects to Quakerism is Dickinson's commitment to participatory political deliberation and religious freedom, his insistence on preserving unity in political action, and his initial reluctance to fight.

Joe Coker concludes the collection with a careful study summarizing the Baptist contribution to early America as exhibited in the contrasting characters of Isaac Backus and John Leland. Coker carefully delineates the various types of Baptists in this period, demonstrates their explosive growth in the last few decades of the eighteenth century, and describes their political dissent in both Britain and America. He also elucidates the relationship of these clergymen with both Madison and Jefferson. While both Leland and Backus led their fellow Baptists in demanding religious liberty, they differed on the particulars. Backus wanted privileged status for Protestants (as opposed to Deists or Muslims, for

example) while Leland opposed any such preference. Backus and Leland also disagreed on the question of strict separation of church and state, with Leland again preferring the more "progressive" route of dissolving the partnership.

Faith and the Founders is a fine survey of various persons, religious traditions, and relevant political groups. Beginners who are content with a survey approach will find much to appreciate. Those already versed in the literature will likely discover new avenues for exploration. One comes away from *Faith and the Founders* with a clear appreciation of the varieties of religious belief existing at the time of the Revolution and Founding. In this way, the book resembles its subject. America is a kind of edited collection herself, and can only be understood as the work of many diverse contributors.

Endnotes

1. Daniel L. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 12.
2. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible*, 18.
3. Dresibach, *Reading the Bible*, 16.
4. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible*, 38.
5. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible*, 39.
6. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible*, 56
7. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible*, 198.
8. Thomas Kidd, "The Founders and Islam," *Faith and the Founders of the American Republic*, eds. Mark David Hall and Daniel L. Dreisbach (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 85.