# Satire, Sincerity, and Swift's "Exploded" Gospel

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# Satire, Sincerity, and Swift's "Exploded" Gospel

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## Abstract
This essay examines Jonathan Swift's satire *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity* in order to re-evaluate the conventions of sincerity. Whereas the *Argument* is typically recognized as satirizing insincere Christian belief, my literary-historical approach focuses on Swift's references to public opinion and the speaker's claim that the Gospel ''is generally antiquated and exploded.'' For Swift, public opinion has a distorting effect on communication, and yet he participates in the public sphere nevertheless. This performative contradiction provides an instructive addition to Christian debates concerning the moral dangers of assimilation and taking on a role.

## Keywords
Jonathan Swift, public sphere, mediation, satire, sincerity

Satire of the early eighteenth century is typically regarded as having few, if any, links to the evangelical movement that emerged in England in the 1730s. This state of affairs is unfortunate, since the movement demonstrated an affinity for satirical writing and John Wesley, for one, regarded Jonathan Swift as a model for imitation.[1] It is additionally unfortunate because satire, as a means of engaging with a public audience, draws attention to the performative dimension of sincerity— understood not merely as a moral category[2] but as a set of conventions which can be learned and manipulated—in ways that are salutary for considering the tensions between religious life and its public manifestations. There are formidable differences between Augustan and Evangelical writers. The emphasis on sincerity for which Wesley is remembered, focused on the inner self, often leads to the distrust of satire. Augustan satire advertised itself as exposing folly and vice, but the techniques of irony and impersonation prove difficult to reconcile with the communicative norm that one should express one's beliefs in a direct, immediate

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manner. If a common view of satire holds that it "works because its audience knows what is really—that is, sincerely—being conveyed behind its insincere utterances,"[3] satire and sincerity remain divided by their attitudes toward mediation. Advocates of sincerity work to convince readers or listeners that their expressions are honest and transparent, communicating an intention that is clear for all to see. Many satirists, on the other hand, willingly subject themselves to the risk of misinterpretation, on the assumption that sincerity's manifestation of the inward state is primarily the effect of rhetoric.[4]

A case in point is Jonathan Swift's early eighteenth-century prose satire, with its long title, *An Argument to Prove that the Abolishing of Christianity in England May, as Things Now Stand, Be Attended with Some Inconveniences, and Perhaps Not Produce Those Many Good Effects Proposed Thereby* (1708; publ. 1711). Swift makes his point in the satire by refracting his voice, employing the insincerity of impersonation to satirize an insincere, or nominalist, expression of Christian belief. An example of the "mock-speech-in-Parliament,"[5] the *Argument* refers to a fictional event in which a bill has been proposed that would eradicate Christianity from England. In the satire, Swift takes on the persona of an enlightened member of Parliament, or MP, who stands up to express his discomfort with the imagined bill. The persona admits that the Gospel no longer commands tacit acceptance. He, for one, is not so foolish to believe it. But he does not think abolition will do what advocates hope it will. Christianity continues to work as a system of social conduct, for which reason the speaker desires to keep up the ruse of *seeming* to believe in Christianity, justifying his position by resorting to the distinction between "real" and "nominal."[6] This distinction shows how the *Argument* can be read as a key text for understanding religious belief as a discourse undergoing change in the period, as Swift prompts readers to deliberate upon the substance of real Christianity and what commitment to it should look like. The fault of Swift's speaker is his apparent sympathy for Socinian freethinkers such as John Toland, who sought to jettison the Trinity in favor of a more rational approach to doctrine, scoured of such mystery. Like the Socinians, the speaker wishes to give his assent to Christianity in a stripped-down form. In critiquing this speaker, Swift opposes the turn to a mode of belief that has "been all but evacuated of [the] ritual connotations" associated with communion in the established church.[7] The conducting of religious debates in the public sphere, as J.G.A. Pocock has suggested, "carried with it the implicit reduction of faith to opinion." Clergymen of High Church and Tory sympathies, of which Swift was one, had begun to object that belief was beginning to take the form of a purely intellectual assent, divorced from participation in the life of the church.[8]

If Swift's satire can aid efforts to historicize the discourse of religion in the period, it also offers insight into the experience of mediation that attends the effort to speak as a public subject. References to publicity appear throughout the initial paragraphs. In making his determinations about religion, Swift's speaker is wary of the "Majority of Opinion," "that great and profound Majority," and "the Mass or Body of the common People."[9] The speaker's deference to opinion

registers the complexity of religion's participation in the public sphere, where authority is based on the appeal to a public form of reason rather than traditional forms of authority. And yet satire, perhaps because it tends toward irreverence in its critique of dominant views, is frequently regarded as manifesting a lack of positive belief in the satirist. This is the case for charges of insincerity more generally, both satiric and not, in the texts of the early eighteenth-century public sphere. Historian Mark Knights notes that, as a means of influencing public opinion, the attempt to expose insincerity in others cannot be taken on its own terms: "The public and the press assumed a new importance but in doing so created uncertainties about public discourse."[10] As a tool for partisan wrangling between Tories and Whigs, religion is openly recognized "as a language deliberately chosen to hide nakedly political ambitions."[11] Knights interprets the rhetorical attention to sincerity in light of the procedural development of the Habermasian norm of "mutual trust" that emerged in the shift toward rational deliberation.[12] Literary scholars Alison Conway and Maximilian Novak make use of a similar contrast, distinguishing between the public discourse of sincerity, which might consist of openly cynical ploys, and an emergent conception of sincerity that redirected emphasis toward inward, private belief. In this standard narrative of literary history, Novak argues that the debates concerning the practice of occasional conformity, in particular, led to sincerity's redeployment in this way. Conway summarizes the development: "Within the public sphere, claims to sincerity—and counter-charges of hypocrisy—had become so commonplace as to have lost their critical edge." A writer like Daniel Defoe thus aimed "to re-introduce sincerity to his readers as a private principle over which they might, in fact, be able to exercise some degree of control and judgment."[13]

This essay provides a more nuanced view of satire's engagement with sincerity and religious belief. Swift resisted the move to relocate religion to the private conscience. In doing so, he encountered the alienation that attends the effort to participate in public debate. In public sphere theory, groups and individuals come to recognize, and work to ameliorate, a certain "rupture of self-difference" that occurs when writing or speaking as a public subject.[14] This experience of self-division looks remarkably similar to the Christian's experience of different, rival forms of belonging, as people who are *in* and yet "not *of* the world" (John 17.16). Such a tension bears specific consequences for self-expression, as linguistic agency requires growing in the awareness that the individual utterance contains, and quickly becomes caught up in, a number of limitations upon that agency. This is especially the case with the representation of sincerity, which as Jane Taylor observes, is "called upon to stage itself in relation to an external authority."[15] In the public sphere, the practical realities of mediation, as I shall refer to them, can thus have a distorting effect on the message being communicated and, we might say, the object of knowledge that is rendered. Swift's *Argument* provides a useful point of departure for a survey of this complexity. I will focus in my reading of the *Argument* on the speaker's claim that "The system of the Gospel, after the fate of other systems, is generally antiquated and exploded."[16] The idea that the gospel

is "exploded," or no longer believable, points to Swift's ambivalence about public discourse. He objects to the distorting effects of the public sphere, and yet participates in the public sphere as a necessary part of the process of making these known.

## Framing the *Argument*

In *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, David Bebbington observes that the Methodist minister John Wesley "commended Swift, with his ability to wield language like a rapier, as a model for imitation." While it seems likely that the Wesleys were attracted to the earlier author for the simplicity of his prose, Bebbington explains that Evangelicals were perhaps most interested in satirical writing. "Swift's favourite genre, satire, was indulged in by Evangelicals," he writes, "for were there not classical precedents?" In the absence of research on which of Swift's works were read by the evangelicals, it is worth imagining that the *Argument* would have had significant appeal. The *Argument*'s interest in critiquing half-hearted or empty belief is one clear point of affinity. Swift's satire operates by the reduction to absurdity, targeting the pragmatism of those who would yield to, or seek to compromise with, the growth of freethinking and atheism. Partly, the satire has the effect of purifying religious belief, raising it to a fullness not reducible to a social code. It produces this effect because the speaker's endorsement of Christianity is laughable. He is hedged and timid, overly cautious. England should retain the established church because complete eradication, as the full title announces, "May, as Things Now Stand, Be Attended with Some Inconveniences, and Perhaps Not Produce Those Many Good Effects Proposed Thereby." Many Englishmen are Christians only in name anyway, he explains, so this solution should satisfy all parties involved. Swift is making a dig at his fellow Anglicans—no one really believes these days, even if they say they do. Readers are meant to react incredulously, it would seem, by insisting on a more robust Christian faith.[17]

Two objections arise from the license with which I propose framing the *Argument*. The first objection, introduced above, concerns the mediation of satire. The demands of sincerity militate against taking on a voice that is not one's own, and there is a vast distance separating Wesley from Swift on this issue. As a moral imperative, sincerity works to collapse the space between speaker and audience by rendering insignificant the medium of communication. Sincerity directs a speaker toward reassuring the audience that it is witnessing the whole person, that this person conceals no subtext or agenda. As a moral imperative, this aspect of sincerity operates in deliberative democracy as well as in religious discourse. As Elizabeth Markovits explains in her examination of Habermasian discourse ethics, "an explicit claim to sincerity carries with it an implicit (metadiscursive) claim to know," such that a speaker must appear to be in control of the entirety of her meaning.[18] Sincerity must manifest a commitment to transparency, in this sense, to be effective. The sincere speaker devises cues or signs of presence and immediacy in order to convey a sense of forthright openness.

In the culture of eighteenth-century England, sincerity grows in importance to the extent that one's internal state becomes more meaningful than conformity to an external code.[19] For the Methodist minister John Wesley, "sincerity" functioned as a keyword for identifying and evaluating those who pursued circumcision of the heart in opposition to the empty formalism of the established church.[20] Wesley did not trust ritual and ceremony because such acts did not entail the presence of inward belief. Instead, he emphasized the presence of the inward sensations by which the Holy Spirit was "shed abroad" in his breast, especially when that expression violated the distancing required by the conventions of politeness or social decorum.[21] In a journal entry for 3 November 1738, Wesley records meeting with a group at Oxford. "I was grieved," he writes, "to find prudence had made them leave off singing psalms. I fear it will not stop here. God deliver me, and all that seek him in sincerity, from what the world calls Christian prudence!"[22] Prudence, a socially acceptable form of distancing oneself from one's emotions, proved anathema to the evangelical focus on the heart because it served as a form of concealment, giving permission to individuals to hide from others their true beliefs.[23] Sincerity called for the transparent display of emotion, such that suppression of feeling could be interpreted as spiritual decline. In the entry for 17 July 1739, for example, Wesley records having met a gentleman at Bath who displayed "the strongest marks of sincerity and affection"; but when Wesley returned at a later date, he unfortunately "found him quite cold."[24] Because the man did not display the signs of spiritual vigor, Wesley could tell that he was no longer seeking Christ "in sincerity."[25] As a mode of self-expression, sincerity required that believers convey adequate signs that they possessed the right disposition for receiving and sustaining a deeply held faith.

In the sermon "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," Wesley marshaled biblical support for sincerity, making the claim that Christians must not willingly obscure their intention. The sermon begins with the citation of the word "sincerity" in 2 Corinthians 1.12: "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." The passage serves Wesley as a proof-text for Christian communication. Assuring the church of Corinth of his honest intentions, Paul appeals to the Corinthians as equals from whom he will not withhold the truth in any way. A speaker should work to make his or her intention immediately understood, it seems, no matter the audience. In the sermon, Wesley proceeds to define sincerity in relation to the speaker's intention: "simplicity regards the intention itself, sincerity the execution of it; and this sincerity relates not barely to our words, but to our whole conversation."[26] H.W. Spaulding, commenting on the sermon, celebrates Wesley's ability to connect "intention and execution in such a way as *to completely evacuate the false dichotomy* between being and doing" (emphasis mine).[27] Such a statement is part of the problem, I suggest, of elevating sincerity to a communicative norm. The claim that being and doing do not actually constitute separate categories, and that any differences between them may be forcefully "evacuated," ignores at the very least "the way language is enacted in

media."[28] In the essay "Sincerity, 'Modernity,' and the Protestants," Webb Keane explains that this Reformation view of sincerity regards language as a transparent window onto the speaker's interior state:

> The concept of sincerity...seems to assume a clear distinction between words and thought, as parallel discourses (interior and exterior) such that they either could or could not match up. Should they indeed match up, language would thereby become transparent, nothing significant would remain of the material forms or social origins of words, allowing the unmediated thought to reveal itself.[29]

As Keane explains, such a view of sincerity has long invested certain modes of speech with moral significance and oriented our assumptions regarding the relation between speakers and their audiences. Alphen and Bal echo this assessment when they frame sincerity as "a mode of self-expression generally held to be nondiscursive, transparent, and outside of ideology." To gain the trust of an audience, speakers must work to disavow the agency and medium of language as posing any significant obstacle, or having any central importance, in the act of communication. Doing so, however, involves a recognition that certain phrases and cues work better than others. In this process, the speaker quickly encounters the mediation of rhetoric. Sincerity is "necessarily a problem of performance."[30]

Traditionally, the satirist shares sincerity's concern about the difference between inward beliefs and external actions. For the satirist, the two hardly ever match up. Human behavior is thus a perennial target. But the satirist assumes the license of using such differences for her own ends, exploiting the relative distance between the literal and the intended meaning of an utterance as a screen for concealing—at least until it dawns upon the reader—her actual feelings or thoughts. Readers must come to recognize that a marked distance separates the satirist from the assertion being made, giving themselves to a process of interpretation marked by the deferral of meaning. Building on the work of H.P. Grice, Charles Knight describes the process as one that flouts or violates the standard conventions of conversation. When a violation occurs, "the readers must then hypothesize plausible explanations of what the author's intended meaning must be in order to fit both his offensive utterance and the cooperative principle that governs the interpretive situation."[31] The search for the intended meaning does not necessarily result in a simple reversal. It may reveal, instead, a disconcerting surplus of meaning. The satiric utterance, when properly understood, does not necessarily reveal a univocal intention or resolve into a stable transparency. Fredric Bogel comments on this strategic use of language. When the satirist says "Nice day" with an ironic tone of voice, the tone works to undercut the statement. But it does not necessarily negate the statement, and in this way it troubles the communicative act. The satirist "is not saying simply 'Awful day' but 'Nice day' as well." The satiric utterance is an instance of "saying one thing and meaning two, or of saying one thing that means two," which means that "the reader may feel himself in an extraordinarily secure position only to find the ground under his feet beginning to quake and tremble."[32] Of course, such

occasions need not result in fear of uncertainty or suspicions about the aims of the speaker. There is delight to be obtained from such moments of surplus, especially when satirist and audience share a community or draw upon underlying sympathies.[33]

The claim that Swift uses insincerity for the purposes of promoting a more robust belief requires addressing a second objection to my framing of the *Argument*. The complexity of Swift's satires has led critics to question whether the satirist held any inward faith at all. In *Swift and the Church of Ireland, 1710–24*, Christopher Fauske suggests that true religion for Swift may not have involved belief as understood in terms of an interior, individual state. Swift "believed" in the established church, rather, as a political institution that had to be maintained. He defended "a Christianity built upon divine edict and practiced as a civic duty," which required "a public which conformed regardless of personal faith."[34] According to Fauske, it is notable that Swift demonstrated a preference for public debates rather than theological discussion. Swift "engaged willingly in secular debates in an attempt to strengthen the position of his allies in his own church,…[but] many of his allies looked with scepticism upon his apparent lack of faith."[35] This skepticism appears in assessments of the *Argument*, where Swift's critique of nominalism has been interpreted as gesturing to an ideal form of Christianity whose existence is no longer regarded as possible. Swift defends "an orthodoxy that no longer exists as he defends it," argues Brian Connery.[36] Brean Hammond underscores this view: "In all of Swift's early writings, and even in the *Argument* itself, readers can infer behind the satire the sincerely held view that Christianity as propounded in the Gospels is an impossible ideal."[37] On this reading, Swift values Christianity largely as a social code independent of, and possibly irrelevant to, an inward faith.

This skepticism extends to interpretation of the *Argument*, where many critics find Swift questioning belief in general. As a "monitory" satire,[38] the *Argument* shows Swift seeking to improve the critical reading habits of his readers, enlisting them against the speaker's use of cost-benefit analysis and his use of reason as divorced from tradition and doctrine. Sensitivity to tone directs readers to distinguish between the apparent or surface-level meaning and the satirist's actual, intended meaning, as they search for the clergyman behind the persona. As Leo Damrosch observes in his recent biography, Swift used impersonation "as a way of standing outside himself, inhabiting someone else's mind and then subverting it from within."[39] As readers track this process of subversion at work in the satire, they become less credulous and more reflective, gaining distance on the methods and reasons by which the speaker argues for and against Christianity.[40] The distancing of irony requires readers to reflect on the construal that orients their religious belief; they must consider why it is they believe what they do. And yet, for Anglican readers who shared Swift's commitment to the established church, the satire appears to frustrate, rather than confirm, that particular construal.

Swift leads readers into moments of deep confusion, as the irony "become[s] reflexive and plural in its implications."[41] The disequilibrium seems to direct

readers away from fixed belief, preventing them from returning to it open-eyed and strengthened. The oft-cited instance of this frustration appears early in the satire, when the speaker issues the following disavowal:

> I hope no reader imagines me so weak to stand up in the defense of real Christianity, such as used in primitive times (if we may believe the authors of those ages) to have an influence upon men's belief and actions. To offer at the Restoration of that, would be a wild Project; it would be to dig up Foundations; to destroy at one Blow *all* the Wit, and *half* the Learning of the Kingdom; to break the entire Frame and Constitution of Things; to ruin trade, extinguish Arts and Sciences with the Professors of them; in short, to turn our Courts, Exchanges and Shops into Desarts.[42]

The passage presents a possible claim about what Swift, as distinct from his persona, takes to be real religion. First and foremost, we note that it constitutes the temporal passage of return or restoration, a shift from the present to the past, one which involves arriving at a form of religion that is capable of having "an influence upon men's belief and actions." The temporality of Christianity, its belatedness, means that it is radically opposed to modernity, and this opposition takes a violent form. As the satire has already signaled that readers should bracket the truth of the speaker's statements, it may appear here that Swift is using hyperbole in the service of irony to caricature true religion as a relic of the past. As distinct from the clergyman writing the satire, the speaker would then be paranoid, possessed by an inordinate fear of religion, associating violence with religious belief *tout court*. Perhaps he is thinking of the sectarian violence and wars of religion that dominated seventeenth-century Protestantism in England as well as in Europe. Evidence for such an interpretation appears elsewhere in Swift's early writings. The action of digging up and destroying cited by the persona evokes, for instance, the memorable scene in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) when Jack, the representative of Calvinist reform, destroys his coat in the attempt to "reform [his] Vestures into the Primitive State, prescribed by their Father's *Will*."[43] The "wild Project" in the *Argument* can refer to the reformist impulse which Swift's defense of establishment continually sought to oppose.[44] Such examples represent sectarian religion as fundamentally disruptive.

Critics detect the possibility of a double irony in the passage, whereby Swift ends up sharing in the speaker's rejection of real Christianity. This interpretation focuses on the apparent problem that Swift does not substitute a positive view of religion for the one he attacks. Neither the surface nor the ironic meaning of the speaker's disavowal of primitive Christianity provides a satisfactory solution. "Knowing Swift," writes Ashley Marshall, "we may be certain that he is not really championing the merely nominal preservation of Christianity, but that he believed a return to 'real' Christian practice was possible is highly unlikely."[45] The satirist's claim to a more-than-nominal Christianity remains unclear, according to this reading, suggesting that real Christianity was irrevocably lost through the passage of historical time. Swift's writings "about religion," writes Damrosch, "confirm[ed] that

doctrine mattered to him only in institutional terms."[46] The *Argument* targets the speaker's nominalist assent to religion, yet, as Damrosch explains, the satire also "make[s] the point that 'nominal Christianity' is all that really exists anymore."[47] The reader is left unmoored. Swift does not provide any assurance as to the actual substance of the Christian faith. In "Swift, God, and Power," Michael DePorte argues that Swift's primary goal is the preservation of the established church as a state institution, rather than the truth value of any actual doctrine or belief.[48] He explains, "for all the militant orthodoxy of Swift's clerical views, questions about the true nature of his beliefs persisted throughout his career among members of his own church."[49] Swift "went out of his way to conceal [his piety]." Like his own parishioners, we may be left wondering, "What then did Swift really believe?"[50]

It is important to recall that Swift opposed the relocation of Protestant belief inward, resisting the Enlightenment process by which Christianity would become an object of knowledge abstracted from its ritual enactment. One implication of this observation is that the search for doctrinal content may be misguided. If the satire targets a rationalized form of Christianity, the search for real religion may not be satisfied by locating a stable propositional content or a subjectivized form of belief. The attention to publicity that we have mentioned suggests an alternate reading, one that takes account of Swift's concern that public debate about the church had led to, according to Brian Connery, "the relocation and consequent deformation of religion in the public sphere."[51] On this view, Swift's lament represents the waning of religious authority that attends the standard account of the public sphere. As Habermas has told this story, the public sphere contributed to "the emancipation of civil society's private people from the semipublic bonds of the Church."[52] Discussion of religion underwent a significant change of form; the clergy no longer held a monopoly, as it were, on religious topics. The fact that the clergy participated in the public sphere has not been sufficiently explored. As Lund argues, Habermas "overlooks completely the stubborn refusal of churchmen . . . to accede either to the charms of a purely 'inward faith' or to the milder blandishments of reason."[53] Framed thus, Swift's *Argument* is an oppositional contribution to public discussion (or is imagined to be), which is to say that the satire enacts a contradiction. Swift both participates in and seeks to oppose the deliberation of the public sphere.

## Public Opinion and the "Voice of God"

The comment that the system of the Gospel is "exploded" appears in the exordium that comprises the beginning paragraphs to the mock-speech-in-Parliament.[54] The bulk of the short treatise consists of ticking through nine different advantages that have been proposed to result from the abolition of Christianity. In the body of the satire, the speaker rebuts each of the advantages by pointing out the various "inconveniences" that would follow, or by arguing that what has been proposed already exists in a practical sense. It is the exordium where Swift's deep ambivalence toward public discussion appears most clearly. This ambivalence has

elsewhere drawn the attention of scholars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, who have "puzzled over how religious and political participants could, simultaneously, both censor and write books at the same time."[55] Isn't it odd that clergyman could use the publicity of discussion to reassert clerical authority? When reading the *Argument* this strangeness must be taken into account. Swift criticizes the public sphere but continues to participate in it, not presuming that he can condemn it from a position of ideological purity, set apart. Critique requires taking on the identities and forms of language that are offered to him and holding them up to scrutiny.

Swift's ambivalence in this regard provides a way of understanding the theme of publicity, as well as the reference to the "exploded" Gospel, in the satire. Swift's speaker notes that public opinion puts limits on thought and expression. In the first paragraph, the speaker identifies a form of *de facto* censorship and registers anxiety about the constraints of the public sphere. He begins cautiously, for this reason, because he knows what is at risk in offering his argument to the public: "I am very sensible what a weakness and presumption it is, to reason against the general humor and disposition of the world." Already Swift makes a dig at public opinion, subtly raising the issue of disposition's influence on the exercise of what is termed "reason." After establishing this implicit contrast, the speaker cites the recent example of the Act of Union with Scotland in 1707. The nature of the discussions that attended that event, he explains, requires him to be deferential toward the public: "I remember it was with great justice," he writes, "and a due regard to the freedom both of the public and the press, forbidden upon several penalties to write, or discourse, or lay wagers against the Union." In a jarring juxtaposition, reference to prohibition in this sentence follows hard on the phrase "freedom of the press"—as if Swift seemed to be anticipating Foucault. The speaker and Swift both imply that freedom has its own constraints. Minority views meet with resistance which amounts to a kind of censorship. When the public opinion began to favor the Union, the speaker notes that it began to operate thus for those who wished to continue registering their views. This opposition, the speaker explains, was regarded as "a design to oppose the current of the people" and "a manifest breach of the fundamental law that makes this majority of opinion the voice of God." Swift drew this reference to the people as "the voice of God" from such Whig writings as John Toland's *Anglia Libera, or the Limitation and Succession of the Crown of England* (1701). In that treatise, Toland, a Deist, argued that "*the voice of the People is the Voice of God.*"[56] By calling this assumption a "fundamental law," however, the *Argument* lifts it up to scrutiny, effectively bracketing the phrase and putting it in question. The phrase seems an exaggeration made by the satirist for the purpose of prompting readers to conclude precisely the opposite. Who would raise opinion to such status? The assumption that consensus could be elevated to the level of providential direction or divine decree seems a conservative means of justifying the status quo; or, in Toland's case, a radical means of threatening royal prerogative. To equate God's voice with majority opinion registers an incongruity that discerning readers, we presume, should try to set right.

The speaker acknowledges the power of the majority for the particular purpose of registering his own cautious resistance toward the forces of abolition. Although "all parties appear so unanimously determined on this point [regarding the abolition of Christianity]," he cannot be of the same mind. What follows is presented as an act of rhetorical bravery, and the echo of Christian martyrdom lends humor to the passage. The speaker makes what sounds like a strong commitment to an oppositional Christian faith. He will stand up for Christianity, he claims, even if "I were sure an order were issued for my immediate prosecution by the attorney-general." The joke of the matter is that the MP is not making much of a stand; or that what he is standing for, as it were, is too slight to bear any weight. With his constant hedging, the speaker does not come off like someone possessed of much strength of character. He continues:

> Therefore I freely own that all appearances are against me. The system of the Gospel, after the fate of other systems, is generally antiquated and exploded: and the mass or body of the common people, among whom it seems to have had its latest credit, are now grown as much ashamed of it as their betters; opinions, like fashions, always descending from those of quality to the middle sort, and thence to the vulgar, where at length they are dropped and vanish.

The speaker's characterization of the public in this passage further establishes Swift's interest in the dynamics of the public sphere. The stand that Swift is taking in the *Argument* bears a complex relation to that of the fictional speaker. For Swift, the current state of affairs owes to the fact that individuals are free to circulate their opinions about a host of issues, from the latest play at Lincoln's Inn Fields to the flubs committed by government ministers. The individuals who come together as a public use critical discussion to "compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion."[57] The error in their thinking, this passage suggests, owes to the fact that public deliberation does not maintain a proper distinction between religious conviction and "fashions," in the sense that one is reduced to the trivial significance of the other. According to Lund, Swift insisted that such a conflation was the result of the declining authority of the establishment: "for churchmen like Swift," Lund writes, "this chaos of conflicting claims could be settled only by the forceful authority of a single, legally established Church."[58]

The speaker's claim that "the system of the Gospel . . . is generally antiquated and exploded" reinforces this reading of the passage. In public sphere discourse, the adjective "exploded" marks the activity of applying reason to expose error and dispel illusions.[59] The action of the verb referred to a process of unmasking what was purposefully hidden from view. To "explode" an idea or attitude was to bring it into the light of reason, as it were, rendering explicit what had been secret or hidden and freeing the reader from deception. It treated the idea or claim in question as a superstition or once-cherished belief that was no longer relevant. The term could be used equally in the defense of Christianity as against it. That is, the significance of the term resided in its functional use. The action of exploding did

not necessarily target orthodoxy; rather, its appearance signals the use of the public form of discussion, which is subject to a different authority than that of the church. This functional use appears frequently in the pamphlet literature. The title page of *The Spurious Prognosticator Unmasked* (1660) claimed that the pamphlet "exploded" the claims of a certain astrologer.[60] *The Starr-Prophet Anatomiz'd and Dissected* (1675) made similar claims as to the power and efficacy of the printed text, claiming to have "exploded by the sacred Scripture and force of Reason" the predictions of an "astro-mancer."[61] The 1689 pamphlet *Sedition unmasked and exploded* performed a similar unmasking, this time in the service of exposing those that harbored political objections to the Glorious Revolution.[62] In these examples, the act of exploding refers to the function of making public, and carries the assumption that what is exposed will be recognized by others as worth discrediting.

Given this association with reason and the clearing away of illusion, perhaps it is not surprising to find "exploded" frequently invoked in the escalating conflict between Deists and the defenders of orthodoxy in the early eighteenth century. The term is used, for example, by the freethinkers Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury and Edward Herbert, Lord Cherbury. Its appearance in Shaftesbury's *The Moralists: A Philosophical Rhapsody* (1711) reflects a common use of the word as a weapon against extreme forms of belief. In his attempt to recuperate a more rational practice of religion, Shaftesbury remarked concerning the "antient Church" that critics opposed the "devout mystic way and, as professed enemies to what they call enthusiasm, had so far exploded everything of this ecstatic kind" that they had reduced the amount of "zeal, affection or warmth in what they call their rational religion."[63] False belief or opinion was also a target. The seventeenth-century Deist Cherbury used "explode" as a verb in his Latin treatise *De religione gentilium*, now regarded as the first work of comparative religion. The treatise, published in a 1705 translation as *Antient Religion of the Gentiles*, uses "explode" as an action performed against opinions, primitive beliefs, histories, and fables.[64] A prominent example concerns the confrontation between ancient and modern: "But as this notion concerning the Element of *Fire*, was not very well entertain'd by many of the most Learned amongst the Antients, so the Moderns have quite exploded and rejected it."[65] Cherbury ascribes the object of the verb to a former, less enlightened age. José Casanova identifies this attitude toward earlier belief with the ideology of secularism. The assumption inherent in exploding a belief sounds similar to what Casanova has called "a modern historical stadial consciousness, which turns the very idea of going back to a surpassed condition into an unthinkable intellectual regression."[66] Especially in Deist writings, the action of exploding reveals a modern, secular consciousness that aligns with Casanova's description. The exploded belief no longer has any value, such that to maintain such a belief suggests a lack of basic intelligence.

On the opposing side of the conflict, the non-juror Charles Leslie invoked the term in reference to Deist arguments, in *A Short and Easie Method with the Deists* (1698): "And tho' they have some *Inroads* among the *Hotentots*, and some other

the Brutal part of Mankind, yet they are still exploded, and Priests have and do prevail against them" (46). Leslie's use of the term registers the engagement of Anglican priests in the public sphere which they opposed and which I am identifying with Swift's *Argument*. Leslie's text enacts, or seeks to contribute to, the rejection of the Deist argument in the contest of public opinion. Swift himself used the term in this way in the *Project for the Advancement of Religion* (1709). In that text "exploded" appears in reference to public attacks on traditional Christian doctrines. "The Doctrine of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the Immortality of the Soul, and even the truth of all Revelation" Swift writes, "are daily exploded, and denied in Books openly Printed; though it is to be supposed, neither Party will avow such Principles, or own the supporting of them to be any way necessary to their Service."[67] The action of "exploding" here is not, for Swift, a comment on the truth of the doctrines. Rather, Swift points to how the doctrines are treated and discussed; he does not assume that the action of making public in these ways would actually negate the doctrines in question.

As it appears in the *Argument*, "exploded" suggests a more metaphorical meaning of the word, as referring to a substance that has "burst, shattered, or broken apart violently, typically scattering fragments outwards." I wish to emphasize this sense of the term in order to frame the speaker's claim that Christianity has devolved, becoming merely a relic of what it once was. The speaker laments that the Gospel is "generally antiquated and exploded," as a way to compromise with the public opinion of Christianity while still wishing to retain it in a vestigial sense, as a social good. The questions raised by the satire, then, are at the root of modernity: what value do we ascribe to the past? In an age of autonomy, when the individual may mold herself into whatever she wishes, why should we constrain ourselves to earlier beliefs? As the brief survey of "exploded" suggests, however, significant revision to these questions must be made. To call the Gospel system "exploded" is to take on a number of assumptions about the past that are ideological in nature. Swift's use of "exploded," I am arguing, draws attention to these assumptions in order to bracket them for further thought. The speaker of the *Argument* indicates that the Gospel is "burst, shattered, or broken apart," but that it should be retained in a vestigial sense. Swift, subjecting the speaker to irony, would seem to hold a different view. His participation in public discourse suggests his recognition that the discussion of religion has altered in form. But the satire draws attention to this change so as to challenge it. Opposition participates in what it opposes. This contradiction is part of Swift's legacy for reflective Christians who wish to understand the complexity of engaging in public debate.

This reading of the *Argument* bears an important implication for the discussion of sincerity. Swift uses impersonation in order to oppose what would be an insincere, or nominalist, assent to Christianity as a system of social constraint. The speaker is too enlightened to believe the Gospel, but he wants others to believe it so that they will be obedient and moral subjects. It is clear that Swift targets the speaker. Our attention to the adjective "exploded," however, shows that Swift recognizes the mediated nature of belief. To continue to think of sincerity

as primarily concerned with the heart, and therefore with inwardness, is to ignore the fact that sincerity relies for its effects on the media that it employs. Swift recognized the "exploded" status of the Gospel in the public sphere, in the sense that Christianity was something about which people had opinions. In Charles Taylor's words, we might say that Christianity had become optional.[68] Taylor's approach is helpful because it allows for the Gospel to retain its power while, at the same time, recognizing its changed status in the "immanent frame" of the public sphere. It is also helpful for registering the need to think further about what it meant to "believe" in an "exploded" Gospel in eighteenth-century Britain. Swift is one of a number of authors in the early eighteenth century who, due to this particular contradiction, can be disorienting and difficult to parse. As Christian Thorne explains, "The Tories, in short, must enter the public sphere to articulate their opposition to it. Their antimodernity, in this light, is merely a special kind of modernity."[69] Swift represents an anti-modern form of modernity. Thorne confesses that he is "curious, first and foremost, how the Tory satirists endure this paradox." An initial answer to the question would be to point out that Swift might not have felt there was a choice.

## Conclusion

A more comprehensive study of the affinity between Swift and the evangelical movement would need to consider the legacy of performative contradiction established by the *Argument*. It may be sufficient here to identify how Swift can contribute to recent Christian scholarship on the danger of impersonation, or taking on a role. Satire licenses self-division as a rhetorical strategy, but the Protestant Christian is frequently reminded of the dangers of assimilation. The satirist who takes on the persona that he wishes to attack may be in danger of becoming the role that he plays. Assimilation constitutes a long-standing moral danger for Protestant Christians, manifest in Puritan opposition to the early modern stage, for example, as well as in Calvin's series of tracts on the danger of "Nicodemism."[70] As might be expected, the distance between Calvin and Swift on this issue is vast.

A recent instance of this danger appeared in James K.A. Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom*. Smith's approach is helpful for countering the pervasive influence of "worldview" thinking in Christian higher education. He argues for viewing cultural practices as "secular liturgies" that rival the formative power of Christian worship. These liturgies have an effect such that they may override the importance of thinking correctly about the world. In this, Smith urges Christians to regard the dangers of assimilation with close to the same urgency as Calvin. Engagement with secular, or cultural, liturgies, can threaten a person's spiritual identity, as these practices are capable of changing one's identity against one's wishes. Drawing thematic examples from literature and popular media, he explains that our participation in culture may lead, despite our best efforts, to an almost imperceptible change of identity. "When does our engagement with culture," he asks, "become assimilation *to* culture?"[71] Smith argues for the harm that can be caused by the habits and practices

that individuals might consider neutral, that is, as neither sinful nor virtuous. If it is common to regard the interior life as immune from external influence, the focus on assimilation challenges the liberal view of the individual self as unencumbered, self-sufficient, and free. If Christians think that the strength of their inward faith renders them immune from outward conformity, Smith offers a bracing corrective. To prevent the slide toward assimilation requires being wary of the eternal consequences of suddenly finding oneself no longer possessing faith in any meaningful sense.

To apply such thinking to Swift would be to reproduce the long-standing interpretation of the satirist as lacking any significant faith, which is a mistake. We may detect another version of the assimilation argument in recent controversy regarding the doctrine of religious restraint. I am thinking in particular of the challenge to Rawlsian accounts of translation mounted by philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, among others. Wolterstorff is sensitive to the fact that to engage in public discourse, particularly on political matters, requires a splitting of the self. In his critique of the Habermasian public sphere, Wolterstorff challenged the long-standing view that religion should be relegated to the realm of private life. To put the matter simply, according to the political philosopher John Rawls, when religious citizens speak on public issues, they must translate their convictions and doctrinal commitments into a suitable form of public reason.[72] Wolterstorff rejects this proviso on the basis that it requires bracketing, or setting aside, one's religious beliefs, which is a practice that conflicts with the Christian's obligation to pursue wholeness and integrity. "It is [religious citizens'] conviction," he writes, "that they ought to strive for wholeness, integrity, integration, in their lives: that they ought to allow the Word of God, the teachings of the Torah, the command and example of Jesus, or whatever, to shape their existence as a whole, including, then, their social and political existence."[73] For Wolterstorff, translation places an undue psychological burden on the religious citizen, one that compromises the integrationist agenda that should distinguish a Christian's public witness. It for this reason that Wolterstorff, in Robert Audi's summary, opposes the call "to split the self into religious and secular personae."[74] Granted that we must observe important distinctions between political philosophy and literary criticism, my reading of Swift is not unrelated to this debate. The satirist laments this split between religious and secular personae, and yet at the same time finds that it is unavoidable.

Our examination of satire, sincerity, and belief has given us a sense of the mediated nature of self-expression and the self-division that is an inherent part of Christian life. It is increasingly clear that both Christian and secular contributions to public discourse can benefit from this discussion. In the essay "Religion and the Public Sphere," Habermas objected directly to Wolterstorff's claims about personae, arguing that "Religious citizens can well recognize this 'institutional translation proviso' without having to split their identity into a public and private part the moment they participate in public discourses."[75] At the very least, the examination of Swift's *Argument* alerts us to the fact that Habermas has little sense of the contortions that religious citizens do in fact undergo when they speak as

public subjects. As the debate between Habermas and Wolterstorff suggests, the literary-historical understanding of Swift's satire has significance beyond even the connection with Wesley, as Christians continue to take seriously the call to public witness.

## Notes

1. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London; Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 67–69.
2. On the emergence of sincerity as a moral category, see Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).
3. R. Jay Magill, *Sincerity: How a Moral Ideal Born Five Hundred Years Ago Inspired Religious Wars, Modern Art, Hipster Chic, and the Curious Notion That We All Have Something to Say (No Matter How Dull)* (New York: Norton, 2012), 225.
4. Explaining that "the subjectivity-bound notion of sincerity has always been a rhetorical one as well," Ernst van Alphen and Mieke Bal advise examining sincerity as "a media effect instead of a subjectivity effect." Ernst van Alphen and Mieke Bal, "Introduction," in *The Rhetoric of Sincerity*, ed. Ernst van Alphen, Mieke Bal, and Carel Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1–16. For this approach, see especially the essay by Jane Bennett in that volume, "A Feeling of Insincerity: Politics, Ventriloquy, and the Dialectics of Gesture."
5. Frank H. Ellis, "An Argument against Abolishing Christianity as an Argument against the Test Act," in *Reading Swift: Papers from the Second Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, ed. Richard H. Rodino and Hermann Josef Real (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993), 137.
6. The characteristics of Swift's speaker suggest the freethinker John Toland, who invoked the Lockean distinction between real and nominal in the treatise *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696).
7. Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 271. Roger Lund describes Swift's faith as one "defined not by internal states of being but by public gestures and divine injunctions." Roger D. Lund, "Swift's Sermons, 'Public Conscience,' and the Privatization of Religion," *Prose Studies* 18: 3 (1995): 155.
8. J.G.A. Pocock, "Within the Margins: The Definitions of Orthodoxy," in *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox Writing and Cultural Response, 1660–1750*, ed. Roger D. Lund (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 49. On the development of propositional belief, see also Peter Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Brian Connery comments on "Swift's rejection of the privileging of propositions—and all that it entails" in the essay "Wild Work in the World: The Church, the Public Sphere, and Swift's Abstract of Collins's Discourse," in *Swift as Priest and Satirist*, ed. Todd C. Parker (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 77. For the "new materialist" interpretation of belief, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr, "Belief," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 22.
9. Jonathan Swift, "An Argument against Abolishing Christianity in England," in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, Volume 2,* ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1939), 26, 27, 28. I have benefited from the discussion of Swift's contexts in Ian Higgins, "*An Argument against Abolishing Christianity* and Its Contexts," in *Reading*

*Swift: Papers from the Fifth Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, ed. Hermann Josef Real (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2008), 203–23.

10. Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31.

11. Knights, "Occasional Conformity and the Representation of Dissent: Hypocrisy, Sincerity, Moderation and Zeal," *Parliamentary History* 24:1 (2005): 45.

12. Knights, "Occasional Conformity," 57. In *Representation and Misrepresentation*, Knights identifies the positive outcome of this development in the ideals of "politeness, rationality, public interest and happiness, [or] sociability" (336).

13. Alison Conway, "'Unequally Yoked': Defoe and the Challenge of Mixed Marriage," in *Reflections on Sentiment: Essays in Honor of George Starr*, ed. Alessa Johns (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 21. Conway draws on the discussion of sincerity in Maximilian Novak, "Sincerity, Delusion, and Character in the Fiction of Defoe and the 'Sincerity Crisis' of His Time," in *Augustan Studies: Essays in Honor of Irvin Ehrenpreis*, ed. Douglas Lane Patey and Timothy Keegan (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 109–26.

14. Michael Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 378.

15. Jane Taylor, "'Why Do You Tear Me from Myself?' Torture, Truth, and the Arts of the Counter-Reformation," in *The Rhetoric of Sincerity*, ed. Ernst van Alphen, Mieke Bal, and Carel Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 27.

16. Swift, *Argument*, 27.

17. Judson Curry provides a useful summary of critical views on the issue of Swift's intent in the satire. While there are those who find the satirist's intent as persuasive, there are many critics who "are not satisfied by the notion that in the *Argument* Swift is utterly rejecting nominal Christianity." For the extent and nature of this criticism, see Judson B. Curry, "Arguing about the Project: Approaches to Swift's *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity* and *A Project for the Advancement of Religion*," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 20, no. 1 (1996): 73. G. Douglas Atkins phrases the question thus: "Does Swift agree with the speaking voice that appearances do matter—and that if you get rid of the nominal, you at the very least incur the risk of abolishing the real?" G. Douglas Atkins, *Swift's Satires on Modernism: Battlegrounds of Reading and Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 87.

18. Elizabeth Markovits, *The Politics of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech, and Democratic Judgment* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 31.

19. Swift resisted the development by which "the validity of mere sincerity [became] a guarantor of conscience." Lund, "Swift's Sermons, 'Public Conscience,' and the Privatization of Religion," 168. On sincerity in eighteenth-century culture see G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

20. On the Methodist emphasis on the "heart," see Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), and John Coffey, *Heart Religion: Evangelical Piety in England & Ireland, 1690–1850*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

21. The phrase appears in John Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 392.

22. John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, *Volume 1* (Charles H. Kelly, 1827), 157.

23. Cf. John Martin, "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1304–42. As Martin argues, "in overturning the medieval ideal of prudent restraint on one's emotions, Protestant reformers gave a new legitimacy to the expression of one's emotions—an expressiveness of feelings that would, increasingly, be subsumed under the ideal of sincerity" (1330).

24. John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, 203.

25. Wesley, "Sermon II, Almost a Christian," in *The Works of John Wesley Volume 1: Sermons I (1-33)*, ed. A.C. Outler, W.R. Ward, and R.P. Heitzenrater (Abingdon Press, 1984).

26. Wesley, "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, *Volume I,* ed. John Emory (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1856), 104.

27. H.W. Spaulding, "Practicing Holiness: Consideration of Action in the Thought of John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40 (2005): 127.

28. Bennett, "A Feeling of Insincerity," 212.

29. Webb Keane, "Sincerity, 'Modernity,' and the Protestants," *Cultural Anthropology* 17 (2002): 74.

30. Alphen and Bal, "Introduction," 6.

31. Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 242.

32. Fredric V. Bogel, "Irony, Inference, and Critical Uncertainty," *Yale Review: A National Quarterly* 69 (1980): 509, 512.

33. Granting that "practices like irony, parody, and sarcasm are often misunderstood, leading to confusion," Markovits claims that "what looks like insincerity may actually be a useful mode of communication," or even "intellectually stimulating." Markovits, *The Politics of Sincerity*, 36.

34. Christopher J. Fauske, *Jonathan Swift and the Church of Ireland, 1710–24* (Dublin; Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2002), 61, 31. In 1949, J.C. Beckett started an essay on Swift's beliefs by announcing, "The sincerity of Swift's religion has been a matter of controversy from his own day to ours." J.C. Beckett, "Swift as an Ecclesiastical Statesman," in *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Denis Donoghue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 153–168.

35. Fauske, *Jonathan Swift and the Church of Ireland*, 6.

36. Brian A. Connery, "'Wild Work in the World': The Church, the Public Sphere, and Swift's Abstract of Collins's *Discourse*," in *Swift as Priest and Satirist*, ed. Todd C. Parker (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 76.

37. Brean S. Hammond, *Jonathan Swift* (Dublin; Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2010), 74.

38. See Ashley Marshall's categorization of the *Argument* as a monitory satire. Ashley Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England, 1658–1770* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 164.

39. Leopold Damrosch, *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 153.

40. For this reading of the satire, see J.A Downie, *Jonathan Swift, Political Writer* (London; Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1984), and David Nokes, *Jonathan Swift, a Hypocrite Reversed: A Critical Biography* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

41. Robert Phiddian, *Swift's Parody* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 78.

42. Swift, *Argument*, 27.

43. Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, ed. Marcus Walsh (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 89.

44. Swift's attitude toward the violence of Protestant reform also appears in *The Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man* (1708). Composed the same year as the *Argument*, the pamphlet shows Swift confessing in straightforward prose, ''I think it clear, that any great Separation from the established Worship, although to a new one that is more pure and perfect, may be an Occasion of endangering the publick Peace.'' Jonathan Swift, ''Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man,'' in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, Volume 2,* ed. Herbert Davis, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1939), 11.

45. Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England, 1658–1770*, 189.

46. Damrosch, *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World*, 150.

47. Damrosch, *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World*, 152.

48. DePorte, ''Swift, God, and Power,'' 88.

49. DePorte, ''Swift, God, and Power,'' 73.

50. DePorte, ''Swift, God, and Power,'' 75.

51. Connery, '''Wild Work in the World,''' 92.

52. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 91.

53. Lund, ''Swift's Sermons, 'Public Conscience,' and the Privatization of Religion,'' 156. Conal Condren offers similar criticism in *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presupposition of Oaths and Offices* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

54. I follow the breakdown of the satire provided by Ellis in ''*An Argument against Abolishing Christianity* as an Argument against Abolishing the Test Act,'' 135.

55. Alex Barber examines this criticism in '''Why Don't Those Lazy Priests Answer the Book?' Matthew Tindal, Censorship, Freedom of the Press and Religious Debate in Early Eighteenth-Century England,'' *History* 98, no. 333 (2013): 682. The Tory propagandist Roger L'Estrange, licensor of the press during the Restoration, provides a signal example of the phenomenon. According to Mark Goldie, ''L'Estrange embodies a paradox of seventeenth-century Royalist polemic. None so deplored the dragging of the *arcana imperii* into the conversations of 'rude mechanicks,' yet none strove so hard to inject the Crown's case into the sphere of cheap print.'' Mark Goldie, ''L'Estrange's Observator and the Exorcism of the Plot,'' in *Roger L'Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page and Beth Lynch (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 68.

56. Rawson and Higgins supply this detail in their edition of the *Argument*. See Jonathan Swift, *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity*, in *Jonathan Swift: The Essential Writings: Authoritative Texts, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 136 n.2.

57. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 26.

58. Lund, ''Swift's Sermons, 'Public Conscience,' and the Privatization of Religion,'' 158.

59. *Oxford English Dictionary*, ''Exploded, *adj.*'' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/66641?redirectedFrom=exploded#eid.

60. John Gadbury and William Lily, *Pseudo-Astrologos, or, The Spurious Prognosticator Unmasked* (London, 1660).
61. J.S., *The Starr-Prophet Anatomiz'd and Dissected* (London, 1675).
62. Anon., *Sedition Unmask'd and Exploded* (London, 1689).
63. Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, "The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence Eliot Klein (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 265.
64. Edward Herbert, Lord Cherbury, *The Antient Religion of the Gentiles and the Causes of Their Errors Considered*, trans. William Lewis (London, 1705), 90, 109, 370.
65. Herbert, *The Antient Religion of the Gentiles*, 109.
66. José Casanova. "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms." In *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig J. Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 59.
67. Jonathan Swift, "The Project for the Advancement of Religion," in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Temple Scott (George Bell and Sons, 1898), 44.
68. In his taxonomy of the secular, Charles Taylor describes modern society as one in which religious belief is no longer axiomatic. In this kind of society, "faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others." Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.
69. Christian Thorne, "Thumbing Our Nose at the Public Sphere: Satire, the Market, and the Invention of Literature," *PMLA* 116, no. 3 (2001): 537.
70. See Robert White, "Calvin, The Nicodemites and the Cost of Discipleship," *Reformed Theological Review* 56, no. 1 (1997): 14–27.
71. James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 91.
72. John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," in *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
73. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues," in *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997), 105.
74. Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 22.
75. Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 9–10.

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