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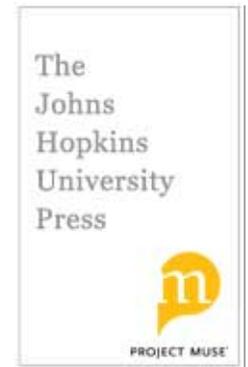
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*Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church* by Luke  
Savin Herrick Wright (review)

David P. Haney

Christianity & Literature, Volume 61, Number 4, Summer 2012, pp. 680-683  
(Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press



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to the reading undertaken by all students of Jane Austen, of whatever stripe or flavor, whether trying to pigeonhole her as Neoclassical, Romantic, conservative, or radical. Surely, no one can truly read Austen astutely who is not mindful, finally, of her Anglicanism, and this well-crafted, erudite, and fascinating book admirably describes and explains that background and heritage. I am a better student of Austen, now, for having had the chance to study and profit from *Jane Austen's Anglicanism* and, perhaps, I can be a better Christian for understanding how the works of Jane Austen foster that goal.

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***Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church.*** By Luke Savin Herrick Wright. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010. ISBN 0-268-04418-X. Pp. 295. \$35.00.

Given the Western perception (challenged in other parts of the world) of politics as a secular endeavor, as well as the recent tendency in the humanities to view politics through the lens of the material, Wright provides a potentially valuable demonstration of the inextricability of politics and religion in the mature Coleridge, as well as the importance of the state's religious foundations to an understanding of English political history from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. In tracing Coleridge's development from his radical Pantisocracy days of the early and mid-1790s to his solidly Trinitarian, Anglican work of the 1820s, Wright shows that biblical authority was always at the core of Coleridge's thought.

As Charles Taylor shows at length in *A Secular Age* (2007), the very possibility of thinking about society in secular terms is a fairly recent and complexly evolved phenomenon. Wright usefully readjusts the modern tendency to read texts such as Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593/1594) through modern secular eyes, pointing out that "in Hooker's time the concept of the secular had not yet arisen" (119), although he may overstate the case by saying that as late as 1809 "the move away from viewing everything as *sub ratione Dei* was just beginning" (120) and that "The concept of secular politics did not exist" (8) in the eighteenth century.

One of Wright's major claims is that Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* provided Coleridge with a basis for asserting the organic unity of church and state, against Warburton's *The Alliance Between Church and State* (1736), which influenced the dominant Whig ideology by asserting a contractual relationship between the two separate entities of church and state. The influence of Hooker on Coleridge is indisputable; that Coleridge was explicitly attacking Warburton is less convincing, given the paucity of references to Warburton in Coleridge's work.

Wright argues that Coleridge ultimately developed into a High Church Tory in a way that foreshadowed the Oxford Movement. Coleridge “was a Tory of the ‘old school’ who believed in divine right and a national church” in opposition to the “new ‘Liberal Tories’” who “saw nothing wrong with using utilitarian philosophical foundations to argue a Tory position” (111-12).

In a discussion of Coleridge’s *Lectures on Revealed Religion* (1795), which he claims is the “lost” book on Pantisocracy, Wright argues that both the radical eschewing of private property proposed in Coleridge’s ill-fated plan to found a utopia in America and his early Unitarian denial of the divinity of Jesus are based primarily in scripture, and secondarily in reason, though of course Coleridge spent much of his life attempting to reconcile the two. *The Friend* (1809/1810) is seen as a turning point toward Anglicanism and Toryism. Wright finds in this work, with strong echoes of Hooker, a microcosm of Coleridge’s mature thought on the relation between religions and politics, though the short-lived periodical’s explicit concerns are political and individual rather than ecclesiastical. Wright devotes 19 pages to a virulent attack on Dierdre Coleman’s *Coleridge and “The Friend” (1809-1810)* (1988), primarily because she sees Hooker as a source for Coleridge’s contract theory, where Wright wants to preserve Hooker as the source of Coleridge’s church-state synthesis against Warburton’s contractual theory. *The Lay Sermons* (1816) provide evidence that “from 1816 forward Coleridge was essentially a High Church theologian” (134). Coleridge’s emphasis on education foreshadows his later promotion of the “clerisy,” and his support of the Anglican Dr. Bell’s educational system over the Quaker Joseph Lancaster’s nearly identical system is further evidence of his firm support of the established church. *Aids to Reflection* (1825) is treated as two separate works on the basis of Coleridge’s own reference to the work as a “changeling”: aphorisms, primarily from Robert Leighton, are intended as a primer for young clergymen, and Coleridge’s own metaphysical project, influenced by German idealism, constitutes the other work. Wright focuses on Leighton as an important influence that helped steer Coleridge back to Anglicanism. In *On the Divine Ideas* (1819-1832), which is part of the fragmentary *Opus Maximum*, Wright finds “a systematic theology” (160) so long as the fragments are read in an order different from that presented by Thomas McFarland, senior editor of the Bollingen edition of the *Opus Maximum*.

Wright’s summary of Coleridge’s familiar and complex attempt to synthesize Trinitarian theology and German idealism is one of the weaker parts of this book. Wright appears to be inadequately familiar with Coleridge’s grounding in Kant and post-Kantian thought, as well as with the many scholars (Owen Barfield, Kathleen Coburn, Thomas McFarland, G. N. G. Orsini, Raimonda Modiano, Mary Ann Perkins, Stephen Prickett, and many others) who have attempted to unravel Coleridge’s theological metaphysics since the early twentieth century. He praises Douglas Hedley’s *Coleridge, Philosophy, and Religion: “Aids to Reflection” and “The Mirror of the Spirit”* (2000) as “the authoritative work on *Aids to Reflection* (and

Coleridge's philosophy generally)" (153), but he shows none of the substantial engagement with the extensive work on Coleridge's theology and philosophy that would warrant the latter part of this assertion. This deficit leads Wright to simplistic pronouncements such as this one on the Kantian distinction between reason and understanding: "The distinction is probably more simple ... than Coleridge presents it as being: reason provides only knowledge that can be gained *a priori*, while the understanding provides only knowledge that can be gained *a posteriori*" (174). Such a clear-cut distinction is denied not only by Kant's effort to combine the idealist and empirical traditions, but also by Coleridge's synthesis of Kantian Reason with God's creative power. Only a few pages later Wright quotes a passage from Coleridge that shows reason's combination of a *priori* and a *posteriori* logic: "'REASON' ... may be defined as power of drawing universal and necessary conclusions from individual forms or facts" (178). Wright also makes a very tenuous argument, further weakened by his own caveats, that Coleridge's use of small-c "catholic" to refer to the Church of England anticipates the Tractarian turn toward Rome. Coleridge's keen sense of etymology and his familiarity with the early Reformation divines who, as Wright himself points out, appropriated the term for reformed religion, provide adequate rationale for Coleridge's use of the term and make the connection to Tractarianism unlikely.

*On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829) presents Coleridge's most complete use of Hooker to ground the proper relation between church and state in a move "from a traditional divine right model to a model in which the monarch's authority as a supreme governor of the church rested on a tacit acclamation or acceptance by the populace at large" (186). This is not a Warburtonian contract, but an organic feature of the idea of the English Constitution. The concept of the "clerisy," those purveyors of religion and knowledge who would carry out Coleridge's proposal for a universal scheme of education grounded in the Church, further cements this organic relationship between church and state. How the chapter on *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (posthumously published first in 1840) fits into Wright's overarching argument is unclear: he focuses on how "the work must be seen as a work about pneumatology" (208) or "the operation of the Holy Spirit through the faculty of reason in the reader" (209), and on how Coleridge's schematic "Pentad of Operative Christianity" operates as "a coded précis of the spine of his argument that extends through the work" (210). The first point is obvious from the text and the second is a strained interpretation with an unclear purpose.

The book concludes with a discussion of W. E. Gladstone's *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1838), a work that invokes Coleridge and Hooker in a Tory, High Church, Tractarian argument against a utilitarian interpretation of the relationship between church and state. Gladstone is very explicitly indebted to Coleridge's *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, and this presents a fitting conclusion to Wright's argument. However, partly because the pieces of the argument fit Gladstone so much better than Coleridge, it appears that Wright may

be reading too much of Gladstone's position back into Coleridge throughout this study, particularly in the perceived attack on Warburton.

Wright's 2002 Oxford D.Phil. dissertation has the same title as this book, so one can assume this is a revised dissertation. But it is not sufficiently revised; it has the earmarks of an immature publication, including overconfidence in the argument, condescension toward the subject (the *Notebooks* are dismissed with the aside, "It is unwise to believe anything Coleridge ever said about himself" [201]), overly long dissections of the arguments of too few other critics, too much summary and quotation, and an inadequate engagement with the trends and traditions in Coleridge scholarship. Wright has read Coleridge's prose carefully enough to quibble with the editors of the Bollingen edition on the ordering of the fragments in the *Opus Maximum*, and he uses a first-hand examination of Coleridge's copy of Hooker to analyze the history of Coleridge's reading of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, but the extended discussion of how he dates Coleridge's annotations reads more like an exercise for a graduate course on textual criticism than an integral part of a scholarly argument and would have been better demoted to an appendix. Despite this book's flaws (which manuscript readers and editors could have done a good deal to correct) the argument itself has merit. Through a close reading of Coleridge's theological prose, Wright helps us to understand the importance of Hooker and the complex relationship between the church and state in Coleridge's and his contemporaries' political thought.

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***The Rhetoric of Certitude: C. S. Lewis's Nonfiction Prose.*** By Gary L. Tandy. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2009. ISBN 798-0-78338-973-0. Pp. xiii + 135. \$39.95.

In *The Rhetoric of Certitude*, Gary Tandy has produced a detailed study of the nonfiction prose rhetoric of C. S. Lewis. Considered as a contribution to the growing body of Lewis scholarship, this book's success is mixed.

Mr. Tandy notes that a study of the rhetoric of Lewis is challenged from the outset in multiple ways. First is the size of the corpus—dozens of titles. Second is the number and diversity of the genre of those titles: literary scholarship, theology and apologetics, novels, poetry, children's fantasy, science fiction, essays, and letters. Third, and trickiest, is the seductive tendency of Lewis' writing to draw the critic away from matters of style into the substance of his arguments.

Tandy addresses the first two challenges by determining to examine only(!) Lewis' nonfiction prose, encompassing the literary scholarship, the theology and