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# Ronald Cooley, 'Full of all Knowledge': George Herbert's Country Parson and Early Modern Social Discourse

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turning their symbolic "proparental" (196) duties into the biological father's concrete obligation to raise, teach, and provide for the newborn child. Puritans eliminated godparenthood altogether where they could, which Calvin himself had not managed to carry out in Geneva (85). Satisfied Anglicans, however, favored tradition.

In a chapter entitled "English Naming Systems" (167–91), the author points out that the English Bible opened a world of additional given names to parents—who now modified the practice of godparents' conferring their own names. For their part, Puritans often favored "grace-names," such as Dust, Ashes, More Fruit, The Lord Is Near, and From Above (169, 185).

The inapplicability or the instability over time of generalizations concerning spiritual kinship finally leaves the reader pondering. Patterns expected either prove not to have existed, or they were ephemeral in the face of religious change and determined nonconformity. Explanations of difference deriving from economic forms and the presence or lack of gentry in a given parish are unreliable. In the end, it would seem that families in early modern England sought theirs and their children's best advantage in a combination of strategies, which could include the selection of godparents. These strategies could shift, along with economic and social conditions, as quickly as the next child of a couple could be conceived and born. Perhaps, since seeing this admirable book to press, Coster will have been persuaded by Ethan Shagan's *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) that decisions concerning religion, too, were political in character, a result of communal and individual consideration of possible outcomes. Shagan's perspective would offer a framework for understanding the many variations to be found in Coster's work.

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*'Full of All knowledge': George Herbert's Country Parson and Early Modern Social Discourse.* By Ronald W. Cooley. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. 238 pp. \$50.00 cloth.

George Herbert (1593–1633) is best known for his devotional poems, much admired now but unpublished during his life. Critical analysis of Herbert's work began soon after his death and continues unabated to the present, with particular attention given to his church allegiance and political controversy in the latter 1620s, his most productive period. Regard for Herbert grew throughout the mid-seventeenth century, producing multiple editions of his collection, *The Temple*, and inspiring Izaak Walton to publish a complimentary *Life* in 1670. Meanwhile, though, Herbert's prose work remained underappreciated. This void is filled by Ronald Cooley's new *'Full of all knowledge,'* a full-scale examination of Herbert's *A Priest to the Temple*, usually known as *The Country Parson* (1632, first published 1652).

*The Country Parson* is, ostensibly, a professional handbook for rural clergymen. It profits from Herbert's unadorned style, offering a glimpse into the life and role of Anglican clerics in most of England's parishes. It is clearly of great value to historians, addressing "with a compelling directness questions of social order, daily life, religion, politics and economy" (4) from an insightful author, a narrow lens on a wide world.

In Cooley's treatment, though, it becomes clear that *The Country Parson* is far more than a rector's how-to manual. Herbert lived and wrote in a time of profound change, involving politics, economics, domestic relations, and religion. These changes were imposed on rural communities that were deeply committed to tradition and precedent. Cooley demonstrates how Herbert negotiates the competing claims of new and old, adopting a thoroughly English "strategy of defending innovation by appropriating . . . the language of custom and tradition" (5). This conscious compromise between new and old, mitigating transformation through the rhetoric of ancient practice, is the animating idea that unifies '*Full of all knowledg*.'

The most substantive and satisfying section of the book is chapter 2, which examines Herbert's manual in the environment of the Caroline Church. Herbert wrote *The Country Parson* in the late 1620s and early 1630s, when an imperfect Jacobean-Puritan compromise gave way to the increasing ceremonialism and sacramentalism of the Laudian period. In this dangerous and difficult publishing environment, Herbert adopted a studied ambiguity: "defending formalist practices in terms designed to appeal to the godly, defending Puritan practices in formalist terms, defending clericalist practices in lay-populist terms. It [Herbert's compromise] deliberately adopts and adapts the discourses of potential adversaries in an effort to secure an audience" (53).

This "dynamic *via media*" is instructive; it guides Herbert throughout, as he embraces change and defends it using a familiar and far older language, the language of tradition. When the topic is enclosure, Herbert comes down firmly on the side of agricultural improvement, "rendered palatable" though, "by a residue of traditionalist commonweal rhetoric" (111). Herbert is not unaware of the social costs of innovation, but counsels the inevitable victims of change to labor and trust in a God that is mediated by, unsurprisingly, the country parson. Herbert's treatment of social relations is another artful compromise. He asserts patriarchal authority in theory, but advises the country parson to accept limits on that authority within his own home.

Herbert rejects this pattern of tacking before the tide in only one case, the assertion of clerical authority vis-à-vis the rising professions: law and medicine. *The Country Parson*, Cooley shows, is understandably dedicated to the preservation of the wide-ranging authority of the minister within the rural community. Herbert appeals to tradition in defense of the local preeminence of the clergy, especially when confronted with a "professionalizing" elite of lawyers and doctors who would challenge that preeminence. His ideal parson, "desires to be all to his Parish, and not onely a Pastour, but a Lawyer also and a Physician" (55). Herbert hearkens to an imagined time when the parson (and the parson's wife) was familiar in the cure of bodies as well as the cure of souls, and asserts that the former naturally follows from the latter. Likewise, Herbert bemoans the increasing litigiousness of English society, urging parishioners to ministerial adjudication instead of the courts. Cooley portrays this attempt to preserve the influence of clergy as a turf battle, one that the ministers were destined to lose, but one that remained undecided in Herbert's lifetime.

Throughout '*Full of all knowledg*' Cooley deftly parses the competing claims of tradition and innovation, and illuminates Herbert's use of the language of one to support the program of the other. And just as Herbert struck a balance between contradictory positions, Cooley is likewise conducting his own artful compromise, a delicate balancing act between the historians, who

would claim authority over the past as their exclusive parish, and the upstart elite of historicist literary critics, who would bring modern theoretical techniques to bear in the interpretation of traditional texts. Cooley's engagement in this compromise is made explicit in the introduction, where he characterizes his book as a synthesis of literary scholarship that pays due attention to the recent critiques of historians, most notably David Cressy. In pursuit of this informed synthesis Cooley makes use of a wide range of recent historiography and does not shy from the revisionist/Whig-traditional debate on the 1630s. Eventually, though, he sides with the theorists, explicitly refusing to relinquish Foucault and making liberal use of the work of Lawrence Stone. Chapter 6 also sports a long departure into a close reading of some of Herbert's poetry, a departure that incorporates *The Country Parson* into the larger body of Herbert's work and ties it into modern literary debate, but one that few historians will find palatable or profitable. In the end, though, Cooley returns to the big picture, asking of *The Country Parson* "how modern was early modern England?" (169). He finds Herbert's manual to be a significant road sign, "symptomatic rather than decisive" in the "process of cultural modernization" (173).

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*Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840–1970.* By Richard D. E. Burton. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004. xxvi + 292 pp. \$45.00 cloth.

Richard D. E. Burton (retired Lecturer in French and Francophone literature, University of Sussex) concentrates here on the lives of eleven French women, examples of women whose bodies became, as it were, the battlefield of the culture wars of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century France. From the well-known Thérèse Martin (The Little Flower), Simon Weil, and Raïssa Maritain (wife of Jacques), to the lesser-known Melanie Calvat (of the La Salette visions) and Marthe Robin (stigmatic), Burton offers details about their sufferings as well as analysis of the meanings each offered for her suffering.

Burton's thesis is clear. "In the postrevolutionary French Catholic imagination, the spiritual function of woman is to weep, bleed, and starve for the salvation of others, to offer herself up as a holocaust to appease a revengeful male deity" (19). And who benefits from the suffering of these (and by extension, of all) women? Men, of course. The male-dominated hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church or the individual men who seem to play leading roles in the stories of these women are presented by Burton as reaping the benefits, spiritual as well as otherwise, of some woman's suffering.

Beginning, perhaps, with Joseph de Maistre and other early-nineteenth-century royalist (and ultramontanist) supporters, the author relays a clear message. The outrageous regicides of 1793 were, in some sense, the sins of the entire French nation. Thus it was the duty of all French Catholics to "redeem . . . the nation from the diabolic forces that held it in thrall: the royal blood on the guillotine could only be expiated in the blood of the nation" (xvi). These forces were legion; among them were *déchristianisation* and the rise of atheistic socialism, the defeat of 1870, the Paris Commune of 1871, the 1905 separation of church and state, the Great War, and the defeat by the Nazis in

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