


defined beyond their introductory analogy to the Tory and Whig parties, respectively. But the latter parties were neither entirely stable nor ideologically monolithic in the decades following the Glorious Revolution, and neither were their ecclesiastical counterparts.

For instance, *Render unto Caesar* offers a long excursus in the remote diocese of Carlisle on the 1704 controversy over the installation of Francis Atterbury to the deanery there. The whig bishop William Nicolson demanded that Atterbury recant his alleged aspersions of the royal supremacy during the convocation controversy as a condition of his installation. Atterbury refused, and a stalemate ensued. Leavis focuses on Archbishop Sharp's efforts at mediating the conflict but seems broadly uninterested in the question of whether Atterbury had indeed impugned the supremacy. By any fair reading, Atterbury had surely done so, as had many of his allies in the struggles over convocation. And while Nicolson was perhaps on shaky ground canonically ("grasping at straws," as Leavis has it, 108), he was intellectually astute in pointing out the extent to which high churchmanship in the reign of William and much of that of Anne was frequently arrayed against both crown and miter. As Leavis points out, Anne had on more than one occasion to remind the lower clergy of her ecclesiastical supremacy and "the due subordination of Prebysyers to Bishops" (84). So what, one might ask, was the content of this high churchmanship, paradoxically devoted to the established church but in relentless defiance of its episcopal and royal governors? It was not lost on contemporary observers that Sacheverell's over-the-top divine right royalism flew in the face of his party's steady alienation from the supremacy in the decades since the revolution. These ecclesiological tensions, or even contradictions, might have been profitably considered here.

The religious history of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has indeed, in the last decade or so, begun to push past the old monuments of episcopal biography that had for so long defined the field. But it has done so by engaging with the themes and problems that loom large elsewhere in the wider historiography of Britain in the long eighteenth century: revolution, empire, enlightenment, nationalism, gender, the public sphere. Leavis, by contrast, considers the Church of England through the machinations involved in its governance. *Render unto Caesar* is to be commended for its exceptionally close reading of the personalities at the court of Queen Anne. But one cannot help wondering whether politics, even ecclesiastical politics, is bigger than that.

Brent S. Sirota 

North Carolina State University

doi:10.1017/S0009640723003293

***Benjamin Franklin: Cultural Protestant.* By D. G. Hart. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021. vii + 261 pp. \$41.99 cloth.**

Renowned historian of religion D. G. Hart argues that Benjamin Franklin was a "cultural Protestant," a thesis he describes in a series of biographical vignettes. Scholars, he thinks, have overestimated Franklin as an intellectual or theologian. Rather Franklin was "not a thinker but a tinkerer," indebted to his Protestant roots (9).

His turn away from youthful deism to moral virtue was a secularized version of Jonathan Edwards's view that while "true virtue" was impossible in private, "public benevolence proceeded from a moral sense" (60). Franklin's vocation as printer flowed from a Protestant "people of the book" (73), both a culture and a market that challenged religious and political authorities. His view of marriage was an extension of Puritan companionship, a mean between mercenary and romantic views. His civic uplift was born of the "Reformation's civic mindedness"; in his projects including nonsectarian education and a hospital, Franklin is "doing his best impersonation of an elder in John Calvin's Geneva" (113). Philadelphia reflects Protestant urbanism's decentralized associations of laborers and tradesmen. Franklin, Hart concludes, had little knowledge of Reformist theological concepts: virtue and not faith was the end of religion, and true Christianity opposed all creeds. Despite Franklin's utilitarian stance on religion, his lingering Protestantism reemerged in passionate opposition to orthodoxy in the Hemphill affair and support for George Whitefield's revivalist "zeal and holiness" (144).

According to Hart, Franklin was no first-rate mind. He only captivated Europe's leading thinkers because of the "amateur character of eighteenth-century science" (157). Scholars confuse the "sheer volume of [his] correspondence" (158, 150) for quality. Thus Franklin qua intellectual is best understood as copious correspondent in the Reformation's Republic of Letters that connected tolerant, commercial centers. Even Franklin's natural philosophy is inheritor of the "Reformation's disenchantment of the cosmos" rooted in its separation of grace from nature (162). In politics, "Franklin was a tinkerer all the way down" (170). Whig Protestantism informed his "commitment to harmony and the public good" and pluralist balancing of Quaker and proprietary interests (193). Later, as would-be gentleman and "inveterate royalist" (183), Franklin stumbled his way through failed positions on a royal charter, the Stamp Act, and the Hutchinson Affair. Hart likens Franklin's imperial federalism or separate contracts with the Crown to the 1931 Statute of Westminster, an international union by common creed instead of papal sovereignty. After his humiliation in the cockpit, Franklin underwent a "born-again" conversion to "Americanness" (204). Tests for his zealous conversion required disavowing his former sect (Britain), turning his back on his royalist son, and rejecting the 1776 peace settlement. Still, Hart sees Franklin's dream of empire achieved in the postwar commercial and religious relations with Britain, and in a "denominational pattern of church life that sprouted and blossomed in America's seeming indifference to religion" (208). Hart finds genuine piety in Franklin's invocation to God for aid at the Constitutional convention, but there was no deathbed conversion to Christianity.

Hart uses his thesis of cultural Protestantism to assess Franklin's faith in "The American Creed." Protestants who judge Franklin's heterodox beliefs by their own dogma reach a "dead end," reducing him to a Unitarian or vague spiritualist (241). Liberal Protestantism, reminds Hart, is a legitimate continuation of Christianity. While Franklin's focus on economic prosperity and bourgeois virtues—a middle-class success gospel—invited Marxist critiques of Protestantism as capitalist stooge, and today's Catholic critiques that liberalism corrodes the virtues it requires, this downplays Franklin's key role in providing a secular moral standard for a pluralist nation. This loss of wholeness or integration is "one of modernity's great achievements," attaining not just fragmentation but a new "social fabric" of differentiation and enrichment (243–244).

Hart's book is a pleasure to read—he is a skilled writer. For those interested in both religious history and Franklin, he provides a solid biography that maintains an ideal

brevity. He ignores the questions that consume much scholarship and uses those interstices for interesting facts about Christian history and thought. There are a few minor errors. Young Franklin did not show “deference to Boston’s religious and civil authorities” (43; see J. A. Leo Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006–2009), 1: 172–211); Franklin instructed Sally, not Deborah, in attending church (130). Franklin was not the sole author of *A Letter to a Friend in the Country*, nor are its arguments those of the *Observations*. Hart misattributes a letter by the dancing assembly members to William Seward (140). John Gay, not Franklin, was the author of “A Thought on Eternity” (163). More than Franklin’s “in-laws” (195), his allies in the White Oaks defended Deborah.

At first blush, Hart’s cultural Protestantism seems tautological or contradictory. The American states were often quite intolerant in their direct and indirect support of Protestantism. Hart’s Protestant critics may demand a doctrinal essence, else it is a non-religion—a reaction to Catholicism whose splintering sects evaporate in secularism. But Hart’s thesis is driven by a Two Kingdoms theology: religious and secular identity must be radically separated. Cultural Protestantism is a key part of the “modern society that Protestantism encouraged” (9). Reform Protestantism “provided points of entry for people in many walks of life to make their way . . . without maintaining a religious identity” (7). And while it may not look like the Presbyterian Party took over the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1775, Hart argues that it is no less the “Anglo-American Protestant heritage” (246). If I may phrase Hart’s thesis another way, Protestants were the first in the modern world to politically implement the concept of natural law and its concomitant rights grounded in reason alone. The key question, and a subject of Hart’s other works, is whether the American creed itself requires Franklin’s own creed as a common religious belief.

Scholars may disagree with Hart’s portrayal of Franklin as second-rate thinker. Franklin commented on dense philosophical works and, as I. Bernard Cohen notes, his pragmatic electrical discoveries stemmed from a love of “pure science.” Hart’s own case for Franklin as tinkerer allows him to skirt contradictions, but it is weakened in that he cites only collections of Franklin’s writings instead of the voluminous *Franklin Papers* and additional sources that paint a different picture (such as Franklin’s writings for the assembly). Hart suggests that Franklin’s *Dissertation* does not merit scrutiny, yet he concludes that the essay is “dark” despite its supposed defense of God’s infinite goodness (45). He says it showed a “lack of aptitude,” yet admits it was witty enough to impress Bernard Mandeville (46). Hart’s Franklin rejects revelatory knowledge, yet prays to a god and believes in an afterlife; he is raised in church and spoofs its teachings, yet is ignorant about doctrines like justification. As I have argued in this journal, Franklin was hardly uninformed in theology but borrowed from Presbyterian writers in the Hemphill affair. And with regard to Franklin’s involvement in politics, he was the assembly’s expert (even speaker), who sat on standing committees, drafted legislation, and wrote its official positions.

Finally, scholars may take issue with parts of Hart’s narrative, which leans heavily on secondary sources, particularly Gordon Wood’s description of Franklin as nonpartisan aspiring gentleman converted to radical patriot (Hart twice mentions the Feke portrait, but see Lemay, *The Life*, 2: 320). This view is contested by leading Franklin scholars like Lemay and Carla J. Mulford, who situate Franklin’s writings and affiliations in historical context to show his early American identity, support of popular politics, opposition to proprietary government, and leadership in the bitter dispute in the early 1750s.

Ultimately, Hart's biography is both engaging and thought-provoking, and it will appeal to a general audience and scholars alike.

Kevin Slack  
Hillsdale College  
doi:10.1017/S0009640723003396

***The Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards.* Edited by Douglas A. Sweeney and Jan Stievermann. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021. xx + 596 pp. £110 cloth.**

What is a handbook for? The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells me it is, "Originally: a book small enough to be easily portable and intended to be kept close to hand, typically one containing a collection of passages important for reference or a compendium of information on a particular subject." At nearly 600 pages, *The Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards* is (for those who still prefer their books in the flesh) not "easily portable," nor should it be, for the range and depth it offers. As a compendium, it is an intensive, erudite tour of the thought, life, and reception of early America's most famous theologian, of the many worlds in which he moved, and those in which he continues to—including many this reviewer is seeing for the first time. One finds him, for example, appearing in a 1990 dispute between Charismatic evangelical communities in Australia, and ghosting the American cemetery in old Cairo, where nineteenth- and twentieth-century New England missionaries who "were instrumental in the dissemination of Edwards's thought and work in this region" (543) are interred. Every reader of this collection will come away with their own revelations; it contains multitudes.

That the *Handbook* is so tremendously *thorough* comes as a surprise to absolutely no one; its contributors are a veritable who's who in Edwards studies. The volume's riches, then, are as one would expect, and all the better for being leavened with vital new perspectives on Edwards. Eleven contributors are from outside the United States, a welcome internationalism that gives teeth to the *Handbook's* most distinct contribution: an initial lay-of-the-land of evangelical and academic engagements with Edwards across the globe. On other counts, it must be said, variety is lacking. Thirty-three of the book's thirty-nine contributors are male, an imbalance I care a great deal less about than the fact that almost all of them are either academics in the fields of church or religious history or seminarians. This composition has its own effects, both for better and for worse.

But for now, let us stay with this issue of genre. *The Handbook* comprises thirty-seven chapters divided into four parts. Part 1 explores Edwards's parochial, historical, and missionary contexts, bookended by chapters by Ava Chamberlain and Peter J. Thuesen on what were, for Edwards, his most intimate spheres of influence: his family and his books. Part 2 is the longest section, as it should be. From Robert W. Caldwell III's learned exploration of the interface between Edwards's "Spirit Christology" (155) and his trinitarianism, to Kathryn Reklis's exhilarating tour of the worth and work of a "sanctified imagination" (317) in Edwards's thought (even as, she suggests, it functions "within an imperial epistemology" [319]), these chapters explore the foundations and highest reaches of Edwards's theology. Parts 3 and 4 look onto wider worlds. Part 3