

The fascinating, if all too brief, concluding discussion of European and American comparisons also raises as many questions as it answers, particularly in the case of France. The contrast between atheistic French *philosophes* and the more restrained scepticism of Hume and Gibbon is starkly emphasised in chapter iv. How far did these contrasting attitudes to civil religion contribute to the divergence of France and England's political trajectories in 1789? On the evidence presented here, the impact appears to have been substantial, though Walsh also notes that the French and English drew on a shared heritage of anti-papal polemic, to which both Gallicans and Anglicans had contributed. These are questions to which we must hope Walsh returns. His research has opened up a new angle on the age-old question of the relationship between religion and Enlightenment and deserves to be read widely.

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Die litterae annuae. Die Gesellschaft Jesu von Otterndorf (1713 bis 1730) und von Stade (1629 bis 1631). By Christoph Flucke and Martin J. Schröter. Pp. 154 incl. 1 colour map. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2020. €24.90 (paper). 978 3 402 24685 6

JEH (72) 2021; doi:10.1017/S0022046920002754

This volume presents the *Litterae annuae* of the Society of Jesus in the original Latin and in a German translation. These annual reports come from two small north German Jesuit houses, Stade where the Jesuit establishment only lasted two years during the Thirty Years' War and Otterndorf, with reports from the early eighteenth century. The volume is carefully put together with thorough footnotes and appendix and an extensive bibliography, albeit only of German secondary sources.

The volume includes an excellent introduction that explains the format and purpose of the *Litterae annuae*, as well as the historical context of these two houses. We are reminded that these reports not only went to the head of the Jesuit Lower German Province and to the headquarters of the Society in Rome, they also circulated to other Jesuit houses, where they were read out loud at meals. As a result, the reports were written in a dramatic Latin that presented exciting and detailed narratives of the experience of the Jesuits in these Protestant regions. The heroic traditions of the Society, established in its earliest years, lived on in these out of the way and isolated little houses.

It is not surprising that the reports from Stade, written during the peak of the war, contain many stories of conflict between the Jesuit missionaries and the Lutheran population. But, even in Otterndorf in the 1710s and 1720s, the Jesuit reports are full of stories of the terrible behaviour of their Lutheran neighbours, the ministers in particular. The Jesuits, as they had since the sixteenth century, pointed to, even bragged about, conversions to Catholicism, often describing those conversions in considerable detail. The Jesuits were also savvy about political conditions in the towns and regions where they lived and this is reflected in the *Litterae annuae*. They discuss the generosity of their donors and the sometimes

tolerant relations that they developed with local elites, Protestant as well as Catholic. Finally, the precariousness of the Jesuit position in these communities on the North Sea is apparent throughout as the Fathers were in constant fear that they would have to leave their houses and leave their Catholic converts behind.

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The veiled God. Friedrich Schleiermacher's theology of finitude. By Ruth Jackson Ravenscroft. (Studies in Systematic Theology, 19.) Pp. xviii + 293. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2019. €59 (paper). 978 90 04 39781 1; 1876 1518
JEH (72) 2021; doi:10.1017/S0022046920002973

The title of this helpful monograph is a play on Schleiermacher's surname, which means 'veil-maker.' Jackson Ravenscroft argues that the image of a veil is apposite: Schleiermacher's work reflects a strong belief that humans, 'as finite and particular beings, ... do not have the capacity to know the brilliant reality of God in Godself'. As St Paul almost said, we are forced to behold God through a veil, dimly.

Whereas Barth criticised Schleiermacher for trying to speak of God 'by speaking of man ... in a loud voice', Jackson Ravenscroft detects the opposite concern. Schleiermacher does not focus on human experience and community because he exalts humanity, but because he recognises human limitations. As finite beings, we find ourselves in a particular time and place; we cannot know God apart from his being 'in us and things'. Yet God does not remain hidden: he reveals himself to us in our finitude, and faith perceives him as 'the Infinite Whence of all being'.

This theological insight shapes Schleiermacher's philosophical thought. For although God transcends human nature and language, they find their ultimate fulfilment in him. Philosophically-minded scholars and editors are wrong to secularise Schleiermacher's ethical and hermeneutical writings; both assume a theological framework. Likewise, theologians are wrong to neglect Schleiermacher's contributions to these other fields. After all, the most famous passage of *The Christian faith* is arguably the opening section of the introduction, which Schleiermacher subtitled 'propositions borrowed from ethics'.

Jackson Ravenscroft first develops these themes and arguments in the preface and introduction, where she also positions herself in relation to recent scholarship. She sides with those (including Lamm, Helmer, Dole, Dumbreck, Vial) who have sought to defend Schleiermacher against accusations of subjectivism and inwardness. She is more sympathetic to those who reproach him for forcing multiple faiths into a hierarchy of religions, with Protestant Christianity at the pinnacle (see Batnitzky, Vial). Ultimately, she argues that his emphasis on finitude is the best counterbalance to his 'universalising tendency', and that the provisional quality of his writing ensures that it is relevant today.

The main body of the text is divided into three parts, with part 1 addressing his earliest ethical texts (1789–93). After a chapter which situates these in relation to better known theological works, she considers three such texts in greater detail. The first, an unfinished epistolary novella entitled *To Cecillie*, is remarkable for its exploration of religious doubt and the interplay between religion, rationality