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Gay, David. Gifts and Graces: Prayer, Poetry, and Polemic from Lancelot Andrewes to John Bunyan

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(1468–1525) who linked French victory to a cosmic reform. At the end, however, neither the exiles nor the mystics were most impacted by the confusion and chaos of these regime changes. Instead, it was the citizens who suffered poverty, famine, and displacement.

From genealogical scrolls, to beards, to weapons restrictions and trenches, Gagné draws from an incredibly impressive range of evidence: so much so that this reader sometimes found themselves losing the thread. *Milan Undone*, however, puts forward an intriguing premise, and Gagné more or less successfully makes the case that in order to understand state formation, we should also look at the states that collapsed.

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Gay, David.
Gifts and Graces: Prayer, Poetry, and Polemic from Lancelot Andrewes to John Bunyan.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. Pp. xiv, 209 + 8 b/w ill. ISBN 978-1-4875-0528-8 (hardcover) $70.

At first glance, the "prayer, poetry, and polemic" of David Gay's subtitle may seem a grab bag of key topics, but from the first pages of the book Gay lays out a clear and compelling line of inquiry, showing both how the three topics interrelate and how they together inform a key question of seventeenth-century English literature: How is it that Christian poets who (from our vantage point) agreed on so much doctrine were so radically and creatively divided on the most basic religious activity, prayer?

Gay responds to the tendency in recent work to emphasize the commonalities across confessional divides by keeping central the conflict between those who used set prayers and those who insisted that only extemporaneous prayers could be valid. But crucially to his argument, he attends to the generative effect of this conflict, showing how the poetry (broadly defined as imaginative writing) of Lancelot Andrewes, George Herbert, Jeremy Taylor, and Henry Vaughan on the one side, and John Milton and John Bunyan on the other, was spurred by the question.

The book effectively produces a picture of faithful spiritual writing across emerging divisions, and the chief contribution of the book is the way it shows how intimate the division was: how congregations and poets were all praying the Lord's Prayer, yet in ways marked in contradistinction. All agreed that the prayer was given by Jesus himself, but how ought the church to respond: by saying the prayer word-for-word (as a set prayer), or by taking it as a model for extemporaneous prayer? The question aptly gets to the heart of the problem: in communal worship, does scripture work liturgically, providing the very words of prayer, or does it instead inspire a spontaneous response?

Notably, each side accused the other of praying like a Pharisee (18, 133). This won't surprise readers more deeply familiar with early modern religion, but for most of us, the historical movement from conformity to freedom of conscience is so strong that it becomes natural to see the conflict through Puritan eyes. The Puritans (particularly Milton and Bunyan) ultimately won the literary-religious contest of the seventeenth century, and even this book, as even-handed as it is, increases in energy as it moves to its second half.

One of Gay's central moves is to treat liturgy as poetry, and the conflict as about art and devotion, and this makes possible Gay's way of proceeding. Starting in chapter 1 with the richly artful theology of Andrewes, he traces a path to Herbert who found a place for poetry and liturgy in a faith that valued collective charity over personal zeal. Gay's Herbert is closer to Graham Parry's than to Richard Strier's, which is fitting given the picture Gay is painting, especially given Gay's attention to how, once church unity was decisively broken, readers across the spectrum continued to read and imitate Herbert's verse. Gay moves in chapter 2 to the Interregnum, and to Taylor and Vaughan, who spoke in ecclesial exile as a remnant of that life while the Book of Common Prayer was forbidden. Both writers developed an incarnational sense of the cooperative relationship of nature and grace, seeing poetry as civilizing and liturgy as uniting. In chapter 3, Gay doubles back, showing the young Milton in the 1630s under the influence of Andrewes (rather than Laud), writing *Comus* as art in collaboration with liturgy. *Comus*, Gay argues, not only draws from the Book of Common Prayer's Michaelmas Eve readings, but itself forms a "conformist liturgical drama" (83). Milton is the key figure of this study, as his work demonstrates the movement from poetry in collaboration with liturgy to poetry in opposition to liturgy. Chapter 4 takes up Milton's response to the martyr narrative of Charles I both in *Eikonoklastes* and in *Paradise Lost*, where Milton

designs his second liturgy, the "liturgy of temptation" that Satan offers to Eve, a speech that mirrors the language of Charles in falsely presenting self-concern as devotion. In *Samson Agonistes* Gay finds the third of Milton's liturgies, a "liturgy of dissent" that counters and destabilizes the unity of state liturgies of restoration, leading the readers of the English nation through a biblical meditation of memory and lament. Milton's use of liturgy to fight liturgy effectively sets up Gay's last chapter, in which he argues that the enigmatic "nameless terrible instrument" of Bunyan's *Holy War* is in fact the Lord's Prayer itself, which Bunyan cannot name without being party to the liturgical enemy (129). This most common of Christian prayers becomes coded for the holy remnant of dissenters, its spiritual resourcefulness named through namelessness in a rejection of human invention.

I find Gay's introductory association of liturgy and art overstated, and I do not see here or otherwise know of evidence that supporters of the Book of Common Prayer "defend[ed] it as poetry in collaboration with the inspired texts of the Bible" as such (4). That said, once Gay gets into his argument, the sharpness of the claim is left behind and he cultivates a space to consider the imaginative work of liturgy and the liturgical work of poetry without pressing their exact categorical relationship.

One of the strengths of this study is the way that Gay treats religious polemic on its own terms. Rather than reduce it to politics (either ecclesial or secular), he shows how all of the writers concerned engaged in a common struggle for the spiritual and political good. Throughout his study, Gay points to the ways these writers took aim at their opponents but also worked for a constructive vision, either pastoral or prophetic.

Finally, another strength is that, to the extent that studies of early modern English religion tend to associate active spirituality with Puritanism, Gay shows how the "gifts and graces" of his title were understood across the spectrum as given by the Holy Spirit. What Gay does so effectively is to show the inseparability of continuity and difference, showing how it is precisely the most highly valued practices that become most contested.

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