

Chandler's achievement in this perceptive account is to remind us of the continued relevance of Bell's prophetic vision for the churches in pursuit of international peace and confraternity. The names of the dictators may have changed, but the need for vigilance and action by churchmen of all denominations remains unaltered. This is surely the legacy that Bell would have wished.

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God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right. By **Rebecca Barrett-Fox**. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2016. x + 256 pp. \$24.95 hardcover.

In her carefully crafted monograph, *God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right*, Rebecca Barrett-Fox argues that Westboro Baptist Church—the infamous congregation known for homophobic protests at American military funerals—performs a valuable function for the Religious Right. While Westboro Baptist Church occupies true “hate group” status, contends Barrett-Fox, the Religious Right is free to uphold a traditional American theological position that ties sexual sin to the nation's doom and scapegoats LGBTQ+ citizens. With the flamboyant Westboro Baptist Church in the wings, the Religious Right discriminates while publicly rejecting the notion that their discrimination constitutes hate.

Barrett-Fox uses Westboro Baptist Church literature, sermons, liturgy, and member interviews to present the congregation's history through the life and times of its deceased founder, Fred Phelps. Many readers will be surprised to learn Phelps began his career as a civil rights attorney in Kansas. His reputation as a fierce advocate for African American citizens was tarnished, however, by frequent accusations of unethical, unlawful behavior, and he was eventually disbarred. Undaunted, Phelps applied his take-no-prisoner legal approach to his congregation. As a result, Westboro Baptist's preaching style, demographics, church discipline, socio-political positions, and atypical negotiation of gender roles created strict boundaries that functioned as a kind of “ark, like Noah's, that members are building despite the derision of its critics” (43).

Phelps adhered to the hyper-Calvinist theology of American Primitive Baptists and *God Hates* portrays Westboro Baptist Church as a throw-back to early modern Calvinism and an adaptation of Primitive Baptist theology,

rather than an American religious aberration. Like earlier American Calvinists, Westboro Baptists believe that sin—especially sexual sin—brings destruction to the United States. Counter to forms of Arminian revivalism that measure successful preaching by congregational size, Westboro Baptist Church's Primitive Baptist theology compels them to preach in order to demonstrate election, not conversion. Their small numbers are a sign of hoped-for salvation, not failure. Thus, signs with antigay slurs during soldiers' funerals may be unpopular and unconvincing, but mass appeal and conversion are not among the church's goals. This theology creates a strong sense of identity among members and an intense desire to "obey God (according to Westboro Baptist Church standards)" (76).

Westboro Baptists subscribe to old school theology, but their activism is decidedly new school. *God Hates* traces the group's efforts to use mass media, from their early offensive fax campaigns to their current picketing and social media presence, in order to court public ridicule and demonstrate their election. While the Religious Right regularly condemns such "unusual and uncommon" (86) behavior, their legal activism shows that "the Religious Right and Westboro Baptist Church both legally oppose advancing gay rights, marriage between same-sex partners, the acceptance of openly gay members of the armed forces, and the legalization of same-sex contact" (126). Barrett-Fox claims that "because of Westboro Baptist's refusal to adhere to the Religious Rights' tactics," however, they are ostracized in spite of their shared political goals (126).

Westboro Baptist Church's pursuit of "victory in the war for America's soul" puts them at odds with the Religious Right during their famed military protests (167). The Religious Right defends Westboro Baptist Church's First Amendment rights when they protest at gay funerals, but Barrett-Fox shows that when they desecrate the (presumed) straight, Christian, masculine ideal of the American soldier, the Religious Right seeks to stymie their efforts. Therefore, while both may promote the idea that "God uses tragedy, including military deaths, to capture the attention of, rebuke, and punish an entire nation" (143), the Religious Right holds up American soldiers as the hope of the United States, while Westboro Baptists believe that, "killing American soldiers is God's chosen way of punishing America precisely because it strikes at Americans' hopefulness about their future, their children, and their security" (145).

Barrett-Fox concludes by predicting that, "unless the broader culture rejects the theology that links homosexuality and national doom, those who remain in Westboro Baptist Church . . . will continue to tap into latent antigay religious sentiment" (180). Barrett-Fox also advises those who oppose the Westboro Baptist Church to avoid engaging in efforts to silence the movement. Doing so would imperil the First Amendment and she argues that the better strategy

would be to reject the historic American theology that the church shares with the Religious Right.

Making an unsympathetic group intelligible to outsiders is no small task and Barrett-Fox avoids reducing the group to its most outrageous soundbites. In the process, she creates an all-American theological lineage for a group most American Christians would rather not claim. Barrett-Fox's detailed, deliberate methodology leads to surprising insights such as explaining why, for Westboro Baptists, damning gay people to hell personally is forbidden. Her portrayal of the Religious Right is not as three-dimensional; an equally careful and theologically informed depiction of the movement would strengthen the project. Overall, *God Hates* gives insight into the wild and weird ways that religious movements politically ally themselves and illustrates how one small group serves a much larger contingency of American Protestantism. Scholars of religious hate groups, American religious innovation, and religion and politics will enjoy adding *God Hates* to their libraries.

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Nixon's First Cover-Up: The Religious Life of a Quaker President.

By **H. Larry Ingle**. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2015.

x + 272 pp. \$40.25 cloth; \$38.25 e-book.

U.S. President Richard Nixon has inspired a slew of biographies, numerous satirical television skits, and, yes, a caricature shower head. Journalists, historians, and political scientists have depicted Nixon as brilliant but flawed, as a victim of unreasoning news media and academic hostility, and as a threat to democracy. Surprisingly, as historian H. Larry Ingle observed, in all the vicious and, occasionally, sympathetic treatments of Nixon's political career, few authors have made the effort to examine his religious values. At best, journalists and academics may have mentioned Nixon's Quaker faith in passing, but then shrugged it off, unable to reconcile how an heir to pacifist William Penn could have dispatched so many Indochinese insurgents to the Promised Land.

In truth, Ingle contends, there really was little to reconcile when it came to the interactions between Nixon's religious values and political deeds. West Coast, particularly southern California, Quakers barely resembled their Pennsylvania forebears. Nixon's Quaker community was evangelical, expressive, and fully engaged with secular politics. Indeed, Los Angeles

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