“Did They Kill God or Did They Kill Good: The Christian Socialist Movement and the Victorian Construction of God”

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12 December 2012
“A MONTH hence, when the third part is completed, we shall probably bid our readers farewell. [...] We are glad to say, we have offended some men of all parties; we intended to do it; if we speak again, we shall do it again.” ¹ Signifying the conclusion of its publication and this particular method of evangelism, the two-page article is titled “To The Reader” in Politics for the People. Politics for the People, first published in May 1848 by the Christian Socialist Movement, quickly went out of print a few months later. The publication strove to convince members of the lower class to adopt Christian morals and use faith to face their daily challenges and transform their lives, rather than rioting or demanding governmental changes. The publication was but a small part of the history of the Christian Socialist Movement, and its short-lived success seemed to come as a surprise to the editors. It was immediately succeeded by The Christian Socialist, which lasted slightly longer and ran for about a year, folding in 1851. The movement is not well known and therefore the Christian Socialists’ story has not always been recognized as a valuable resource for studying religion in Victorian England. When included though, the Christian Socialists’ publication of Politics for the People can be interpreted as a narrative, authored by members of the Christian Socialist Movement, that demonstrated a need for Christianity amongst people who had deemed it unnecessary and an archaic perspective of reality.

The Christian Socialist Movement (CSM) only lasted from 1848 through 1854. Since the nineteenth century, however, it has resurfaced in various forms and alliances. In the twenty-first century, the Christian Socialist Party in the United Kingdom shares its origins with the CSM and is closely related to the Labour Party. Yet the original CSM

¹“To the Reader,” Politics 11 (July 1848): 177.
was very different from what became recognized as the Christian Socialist party during the twentieth and twentieth centuries in the UK. In deed the CSM valued theology and morals more than political and social change, while the political party focused a bit more on the later. *Politics for the People* was the first official presentation of what the leaders and members of the CSM such as Frederick Denison Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes and James Ludlow, espoused. These men, who have been recognized as the founders of the CSM, were scholars and pastors of the Christian faith. As individuals, they came from different careers and life experiences and had varying ideas on how to address the growing number of social problems that the lower classes faced in England. Foremost was the growing gap between the economic and social upper and lower class. Over the course of their publication the CSM accumulated over ninety authors for the paper who typically signed under an assumed name, and used a veil of anonymity to discuss their views.\(^2\) The two social distinctions of upper and lower classes affected politics and religion as well, because intellectuals, politicians, and clergy members were in the upper classes. However the lower class consisted of the working class, laborers, and the poor.

Those in the working class had become increasing estranged from the Church of England because the clergy had not allowed the lower classes to participate in questioning their faith. Questioning was seen as outside of the role the lower class played in the Church and therefore, they were dismissed rather than included. In many cases the clergy barred lower class individuals from the church due to a low opinion of the lower classes intellectual level. There were also many divisions within the early Church.

\(^2\) Jones, op. cit., 210.
and social barriers between the clergy and the laymen. For those reasons many members of the lower classes had grown distrustful of the Church.³ Faith was no longer a prevalent source of reason. The debate of Science versus religion was a theme that began in the Enlightenment but continued into the Victorian Era and is still a viable debate in the twenty-first century. Intellectuals during the Enlightenment and the Victorian era favored science because it used reason to come to an understandable conclusion, whereas religion called for faith in an entity not seen and not easily explained. There were Enlightenment thinkers such as Nietzsche that argued Christianity had created its own downfall because as a religion, its theology was too focused on sin and damnation. While he is well known for penning the statement “God is Dead” the second part of the quote that gets lost is “and we have killed him.”⁴ His distrust of Christianity as a source of morality came from belief that Christians had mistreated religion and thus misrepresented God in society. Victorian England ushered in an era of increased disregard of the Christian faith. When discussing the problems between the Church of England and many in Victorian English Society author A.N. Wilson wrote that, “By implication, the Church is [was] only for the middle classes. It is [was] an institution entirely cut off from the struggles and the concerns of ordinary.”⁵ Lower class society then turned to non-belief or atheism because they were not welcomed into that form of religion. The history of religion and society in this period as been labeled as the “Victorian Crisis of Faith.” This is due to the competing views of religion, God, and faith.

³ Here Church is capitalized to mean the Church of England not the universal Christian church.
⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science: with a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, Ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2004), 120.
⁵ A.N. Wilson, God’s Funeral (New York: W.W Norton & Company), 82.
During this “crisis of faith” Frederick Denison Maurice was a minister teaching at King’s College in London who left due to controversy regarding his theology and charges of heterodoxy. In the time following his departure from Kings, the Chartist movement began organizing as an association of people that wanted to champion the people’s voice in political matters and therefore positively affect things such as wages and conditions for the working class with a People’s Charter. Well-known for aggressive tactics, leaders of the Chartist Movement organized a Monster Meeting, which was deemed illegal by the British government. On 10 April 1948, the supposedly well planned meeting and march quickly devolved into a riot with little sense of direction. The strike was the Chartist’s major attempt at organizing, yet it failed.\(^6\) Inspired by the failure of the Chartist movement and Chartism Maurice, who had already been in communication with Thomas Ludlow and Charles Kingsley, contacted clergy members and scholars he knew that could organize a response to address both the lack of faith and the mounting disturbing problems of the working class. In the midst of the Chartists’ upheaval, tensions over theology, and declining interest in religion among the publication Maurice and the other founders agreed that publishing *Politics* as their response and effort at changing the social condition of England. The publication was heavily focused on theology. The group used the articles they wrote to educate lower class men about Christian doctrine. The objective was to use Christian theology as a practical application to resolve economic and political questions. The publication provided an opportunity for the founders to counteract the dominant view of religion with a more compassionate view of God and religion. The Victorian era was operating with a construction of a vengeful God and therefore a

religion was viewed as favoring sin-based theology and damnation over grace and forgiveness. The CSM was concerned with providing a more encompassing Christian theology that would include lower classes and evoke social change. The founders and members of the CSM wrote Politics as though it was the first real connection between the working class and intellectuals. Politics went from establishing dialogue between two distinct classes to a tangible piece of evangelism given to the working class as a resolution for the social issues their class faced in Victorian England. Thus Politics was the editors’ contribution to the history of the nineteenth century and an important aspect typically overlooked by those who did not value religion as a meaningful narrative of a society.

The sources used in research for this paper represent three tiers of religious, political and social historiography concerning Victorian England. This research ranges from a broad introduction to the time to introspective studies of the founder Frederick Denison Maurice. Many historians have gravitated towards studying the crisis concerning faith in Victorian England. It has been labeled as such because for intellectuals it became a question of whether faith led to morality, and therefore had to struggle with what morality meant if they disregarded religious doctrines and tradition. Authors such as D.H. Meyer and Timothy Larsen, saw this occurring both in Britain and abroad in America. A main source of contention for intellectuals of that time was

7 Two examples of scholarship in this field includes D.H. Meyer’s “American Intellectuals and the Victorian Crisis of Faith,” and Timothy Larsen’s, “The Regaining of Faith: Reconversions among Popular Radicals in Mid-Victorian England.” In D.H. Meyer’s "American Intellectuals and the Victorian Crisis of Faith," he places American thinkers in the midst if the complicated debate of science versus religion. Though this paper is focused on Britain during this time period his scholarship has put the Victorian Age in the context of a "crisis of faith" which then influenced intellectual circles. Ultimately Meyers concluded that most came to believe in religion as a basis of the moral nature of man. Timothy Larsen came to a similar conclusion in his study regarding the political Radicals in England. He also references to the time period as a crisis of faith. By examining the reconvensionist nature of English intellectuals, he found that many intellectuals reconverted because without religion they found nothing to adequately
the complicated relationship between the Church and State. Scholars such as G. Kitson Clark provided background information of the struggles with that particular relationship with the history of England under the rule of one institution that combined Church and State. It is important to note that the Church, which as an institution favored religious scholars more, ostracized lower classes. Therefore when the State attempted to use the Church to provide relief to the poor, it was done so on a surface level that exacerbated a division between classes rather than providing real assistance to bridge the gap between classes. A similar grouping of research includes scholars that have examined the Christian Socialist Movement and the Chartist movement. In this historiography works about the Chartist movement have been included to provide more context and background on an organization that was consistently used as a foil for the Christian Socialist Movement. Cheryl Walsh studied the nature of the Church and State relationship as well as the Christian Socialist Movement by way of the theological doctrine of the Incarnation. Incarnation theology focused on the holy and human natures of Jesus Christ. Walsh’s research is a general look at the role theology played and she applies it to the CSM and Maurice specifically, and she concluded that Maurice was more concerned about Christian life on Earth than solely what “life” afterlife would look like.

provide a basis for their morality. Therefore many intellectuals concluded that unbelief could cause more harm than belief in a possibly flawed theology.

8 G. Kitson Clark, Churchmen and the Condition of England 1832 – 1885 (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1973). For further information look to the chapter titled “Phase II: 1832-1865”.

9 Authors Thomas Kemnitz and Eileen Yeo both conducted scholarship on the Chartists and produced two different but compatible works of scholarship. Kemnitz’s work “The Chartist Convention of 1339” effectively combined primary sources to provide a complete picture of the convention such as who was there and where they were from. Yeo on the other hand looked at Christianity and the Chartist Movement and argued that the Chartists did not share a uniform opinion on the role of religion. In Yeo’s analysis the Chartists’ arguments literally took their fighting to the pews. Therefore the Chartists fought the church and acknowledged religion as a potential tool as well as a symbolic weapon of those they fought.

The connection between Maurice and his theological beliefs has been used to explain the actions of the Christian Socialist Movement. Much scholarship on the CSM has then focused on Maurice as the driving force of the organization. Two important works to note were authored by scholar Olive Brose and titled Frederick Denison Maurice: Rebellious Conformist and “F.D. Maurice and the Victorian Crisis of Faith.” He is given the seemingly oxymoronic title of rebellious conformist to highlight what role he envisioned for himself and the movement, because though he advocated for change it was through education and not institutional. The movement was to be based in theology and Maurice wanted to influence the younger intellectual men of Victorian England to begin bridging the gap between the classes by acting as “mediators,” thus not really forcing changes in society but making connections with those they were supposedly helping.\(^{11}\) Her emphasis later was to demonstrate how essential his theology and favoring of “digging” mentality was to how he foresaw the Christian Socialist Movement progressing.\(^{12}\) Another approach included is scholar Paul Jones’ 2003 article “Jesus Christ and the Transformation of English Society: ‘The Subversive Conservatism’ of F.D.M.” in which he examined Maurice’s conservative nature and his theological viewpoint through “works made for public consumption” that were written for larger public audiences rather than personal writings. His work is then an explanation of Maurice’s theological groundwork of grace rather than sin, and he concludes that Politics was written as evidence that different socioeconomic classes could


\(^{12}\) In “F.D. Maurice and the Victorian Crisis of Faith” Brose provided a fuller examination of Maurice and the time period in which he was operating: the Victorian Crisis of Faith. Here she revisits Maurice’s theology by explaining that he saw the Victorian people as favoring religion over actual faith in God and that misappropriation of devotion to doxology rather than true belief motivated him to work with other scholars of similar mentality to counter that with their own theology. Brose wrote that Maurice wanted to reverse the “ […] concept of history so dear to the nineteenth century which saw all past activities as but preliminaries in the great evolutionary progress of man” (246). Her emphasis on his “digging” mentality, meaning focusing on what the Church and Christian Faith already had rather than creating new doctrines and institutions.
live together in a society that benefited them all if there was a change in the morals and values they held.\textsuperscript{13}

Paul Jones’ article is an important starting point because it is an examination of Maurice’s theology in a public setting. In my work I go further and argue that the publication of Politics should be seen as the CSM’s effort to replace the anti-religion narrative of the nineteenth century with one that demonstrated the Christian faith and Church in that time a bit more accurately. The methodology utilized in this paper is a combination of the analysis method of Paul Jones’ “The Subversive Conservatism” and Gareth Stedman Jones in Languages of Classes: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982. Both scholars focused on the language used by their subjects as the story they wished to tell concerning the history they were looking at and as a tool for analysis. While Paul Jones placed greater value in Maurice’s writings that were produced for the public, Stedman Jones’s work had a broader focus that emphasized the importance of language as a topic for study, specifically the consistently changing definition and application of the term “class.” In my analysis I took a critical look at the language used by members of the CSM in Politics for the People to determine what ideas were important to the CSM’s message and how they went about presenting that message to their audience.\textsuperscript{14} Using the language they used as a tool for analysis shows what ideas were important to them and how they went about presenting those ideas to their audience, the working class and potentially others interested in the CSM. For example the CSM’s language is very indicative of their affiliation with the working class, for example the founders used “working class” rather than “poor”

\textsuperscript{14} Politics for the People lasted roughly three months, and rather than presenting my analysis chronologically this paper goes by subject. This is because the changes throughout the publication with their message and how they presented said message, are more evident through subject matter and the frequency with which they occur.
because they wanted to help those that worked rather than those perceived as allowing others to carry the burden, which is how many members of the CSM viewed the poorest of the lower classes.

The narrative formed subsequent to the end of the Victorian Era was anti-religion and focused on progress of modern society. This manner of highlighting themes such as science overpowering religion has consequently created “gaps” in the larger history. Larger pictures or “meta-narratives” as Jean-Francois Lyotard articulated, were created as means to provide knowledge but are typically narrated by those in positions of power. Thus Lyotard’s argument supports the existence of the “history is written by the victors” mentality. When aspects of history are left out it is because the narrator(s) has decided that it does not fit into the meta-narrative and effectively silences those that are “victims,” The victim’s stories by nature become cast offs, and in the postmodernism movement those who had been silenced can be given their own narrative to add to the collective knowledge of a time or topic. This paper aims to introduce a previously missing aspect of the religious, political, and social historical narrative crafted by previous historians. Influenced by postmodernism this study of the Christian Socialist Movement’s publication of Politics rejects the formally constructed narrative. This new narrative argues that knowledge of how the publication transformed from a tool for dialogue with other classes to a product of evangelism is imperative for readers’ full understanding of the treatment of religion in Victorian England. While scholarship has shifted towards inclusion of the CSM and observing their actions as important in regard to recording the history of Victorian England there has not been that much critical interpretation of the work that they had done. Jones’ work in analyzing the language used by the CSM in their publications is an introduction to examining the

purpose of the CSM and what affect Politics and The Christian Socialist had on their peers and on the larger narrative of religion in that time. This study of Politics is used to demonstrate that the CSM was a “victim,” a silenced voice amidst the victors of history in the telling of the Victoria England narrative. While they attempted to use language to essentially fight back, their literary presence was not strong enough and the movement fell into oblivion.

**Chartism and People**

The CSM was created in response to the self-destructive end of the Chartist movement. Maurice and the other key leaders believed they could provide a more reasonable approach to the social condition of Victorian England that glorified religious tradition rather than combating it. Though there are no instances in Politics in which the editors directly state that one of their goals was to discredit the Chartist movement, the first couple of issues focus heavily on providing critical examination of the Chartist movement, including articles that questioned Chartist tactics and reasoning the Christian Socialist Movement, made itself out to be a superior alternative. There are two important articles that appeared in the beginning of the publication’s run that demonstrate how the CSM chose to treat Chartism. The first of the two, which appeared in the second issue, was titled Monster Meeting; it was a piece that used legality to discredit the Chartist movement by examining their use of a monster meeting. Monster meetings were rallies organized with the intent to protest, however that method of organizing had been criminalized and thus those involved with the failed 10 April Monster Meeting were breaking the law. The author uses that fact as their main point and with it builds an argument that the Chartist movement used that opportunity to organize a display of force in numbers rather than create an opportunity for discourse. In a relatively short article the author, damages the Chartist’s
reputation by explaining the illegality of Monster Meetings. He contrasted the monster meeting with the idea of “free and open meetings.” Though it becomes very apparent that the author argues that God, in the end of the article, does not sanction the Chartists’ actions. He used religion in the first paragraph to demonstrate the differences between his organization and that of the Chartists. The author explained that organizations should have meetings open to the public and be legally gathered. A key difference between the Chartists and the CSM was that the Chartists used this illegal form of protest to demonstrate their strength in numbers. Thus the author created an “us versus them” paradigm between the two organizations because the Chartists were naturally disruptive whereas the CSM was attempting to quietly interrupt the direction Victorian England was taking.

Another major theme that appears in this article is the use of religious imagery and language to demonstrate the CSM’s moral superiority. This is first evident when the author wrote: “Two men that pray together are a meeting; two men fighting with one another are not” which is an allusion to a statement from the Bible used later on “Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” As when the author wrote about having open meetings, he used this reference to demonstrate that the CSM was different, and in this case, demonstrate the CSM was grounded in theology and the Good Word (the Bible). As an organization whose members felt that they were demonstrating Christian morality, it had to stand apart from secular contemporaries that participated in things such as violating the Queen’s law (monster meetings). Thus the “two men” comment was a commentary on the Chartists who were not seen as acting on behalf of God’s will because it was not a religious organization and openly

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17 ibid.
18 ibid, 27.
fought their opponents orally and physically. Throughout this article the Chartists were being depicted as faithless and therefore lacking moral substance. In this author’s opinion the Chartists were using physical presence to substitute their lack of spiritual direction. Reiterating that sentiment by including the biblical verse, the author was grounding the CSM in faith and the intention to do God’s will.

Chartism continued to be used by the CSM in their publication because the authors and editors could use that movement and Chartist movement tactics and beliefs as a foil to those of their own. In issue nine the editors included the first article of a series titled the “Moral Force Chartism,” thus continuing to reference Chartism after in attacks in issues immediately following the Monster Meeting. These articles took a drastically different tactic than “Monster Meeting,” in which the author created an argument that concluded the Chartists were disregarding God and religion, because they read as dialogues between a Whig and a Chartist. Over the course of four articles the two discuss liberty, suffrage, and voice of the majority versus individual voices. Though possibly a seemingly large range of topics each article was written to lead into the next as a conversation would, meandering from an initial point of contact to a different discussion somewhat related to the first point. When examined as a whole, the publication it was written to again not completely discredit the other political organizations but cast doubts concerning their reasoning and positions. The CSM used Politics to examine other political parties but it is interesting that the author juxtaposed a member of the Whig party and a Chartist which would be different ends of a political spectrum in regard to the people’s involvement in politics. The Whigs favored the monarchy and the author clearly makes an effort to convey his distrust in the people’s power in politics, which is why their argument is more concerned with whether gaining more “power” in a society will guarantee change. The author began the series by calling on the
men of moral force, those within the Chartist movement that favored intellectualism rather than violence, because he wished to discuss the implications of Chartism as a theory. The discussion starts antagonistically with the Chartist and Whig attacking one another, and as the sniping continues the clear point of contention is the People’s Charter. The charter here serves the same purpose as the monster meeting, before mentioned, because it is one aspect of the theory and movement of Chartism in Victorian England but becomes very large to the point in which it becomes the only thing the reader is focusing on. Within the first article there is a quick exchange that really cements both the tone of the remaining articles as well as the use of the Charter to bring Chartism into disrepute: “Chartist: No doubt aristocracy could sleep easier on its rose leaves, if the people would starve and die respectfully, without making such a noise about it. Whig: I don’t complain of the noise; I only question the cure you propose for starvation.” 19 That exchange indicates that the author wants readers to also question the Charter as a legitimate means for achieving a more well grounded and responsible government to operate over the people. Evidently the editors used Chartism to poke at the movement as a political party as well a representation of a less than developed solution for the class struggles that the CSM wanted to explore in Politics.

Maurice wrote the initial article and did attempt to make it clear that the authors and editors saw their duty as uniting classes and political parties. In “Prospectus,” signed by “a clergyman” (Maurice), the author addresses the separation of politics and religion and proposes that as being detrimental to society because “[...] religious men have supposed that their only business was with the world to come; political men have declared the present world i[as]

governed on entirely different principles from that [...] The world is governed by God [...].” 20 Therefore it was imperative for the editors to construct issues that focused on political factions, institutions of government and tie that and other views back to God. It would be understandable if this particular article was unique because it is supposed to create the purpose of the publication and convince readers that purpose ran parallel with what they felt they needed from a political group and a theology. However it follows a pattern that continuously was used by multiple authors through out the year Politics was published, in which the article is not about something that initially appears to be a theological issue or have a Christian meaning attached to it but then gains religious significance especially at the very end. For example just as with the scriptural reference in the end of “Monster Meeting,” Maurice calls men “children of God” and wrote that: “men have a duty to God.” 21 The last paragraph in which these phrases occur is addressed to the workmen of England, thus Maurice knew they would be selling to lower classes and chose to use their lack of belief as an opportunity to fix the socio-eco-political issues of Victorian England by persuading them to take up religion, Christianity to be exact.

The CSM did use Politics, at first, to at least create the desire for interclass communication because as the full title shows the publication was about “the people.” That was their hook; that was how the editors wanted to bring an audience in because without nonmembers reading Politics the CSM would have remained a “victim” that was unable to counter the lack of belief in God that was present. A method briefly used by the publication was to publish letters written by readers, however the small number of these letters indicates that either the number of letters from the readership dropped drastically or that was no longer the

21 “Prospectus”, 2.
direction the editors decided to go in. One should be inclined to side with the later because the
two most important letters to the editors are included in the first third of the publication and both
are connected to Chartism. One letter titled simply “Letter From A Chartist” is signed by “One
of the Wicked Chartists of Kennington Common” and acknowledged the differences in opinion
between Chartist and the CSM and made a point to express interest in future work. It is very
difficult to prove where this letter came from even though it is dated with a location, because the
CSM employed many authors to write one have two articles throughout the year and there’s no
proof that it isn’t a fabricated letter. Maurice’s son published a book that included his father’s
letters along with some background information as included by himself and he mentions at one
point that his father set up meetings every week for the authors to gather around and discuss the
ideas for that issue. He makes one reference in the publication, to the participation in the
publication by the working class:

During the publication of Politics for the People the workingmen had felt some suspicion
of its being a capitalist’s trick to deceive them by false promises. A few had written
letters to the paper. Joseph Millbank, a ‘Wat-case finisher in gold,’ Thomas Shorter, a
‘Watch-case finisher in silver,’ were among them. The other letter that was published in a subsequent issue was titled: “Letter From a Working
Man” and was signed “A Working Man, but no Chartist.” The working man’s letter has a note
from Maurice stating that the issues raised in the editorial had been dealt with in previous articles
but they “willingly insert it,” which leads the audience to believe that the CSM is truly creating
a publication that demonstrates the founders’ views as well as those of the audience. Both letters
end in a similar fashion in which the readers somewhat humbly offer their votes and questions

23 Sir John Frederick Maurice, The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice: Chiefly Told in His Own Letters vol.2, (Macmillian, 1885), 482.
but ultimately relinquish the final word to the authors and editors of Politics. Ultimately the very people the authors wrote about and to initially, become less and less of a presence as the publication went on. This can be seen in the significant decrease of letters to the editor as well as the working men becoming less of a focus in articles in comparison to God and his will.

**Government and God**

Though Politics was to provide an opportunity for honest discourse, which leaders of the CSM like Maurice accused Chartism of lacking, the editors’ desire to espouse particular viewpoints on the relationship between political institutions and the Christian God became more evident as the issues progressed. A majority of the political based articles were written by J.T. (Ludlow) such as “Government” as well as “Rights and Duties.” These two articles are very different from each other. “Government” is an article in which the author slowly relates his sub points to God and the Christian faith. In hindsight one can discern that the author wanted the obvious conclusion to be to turn to God. This particle article uses a ship metaphor. Which is similar to a technique that is integral to teaching Christian theology, just as Jesus used metaphoric stories (parables) that presented a moral lesson in a way that common people would understand the underlying theological point being made. Ludlow’s ship metaphor expresses that people in political institutions - government - are steersmen that are responsible for steering the ship in the right direction but God is the captain who, as captain, should have final say on if and how the steersmen steers. 25 By using this metaphor he was writings to a specific sub set of their audience that working in shipping and other members of lower classes that dealt regularly with the shipping industry and would understand the relationship between steersmen and the Captain.

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However most of the audience, whether they continued to go to church in this time or not, would have recognized the use of a metaphor as a format commonly used in sermons. The this article is clearly about God from the first word on though it uses the language of labor and it is not about class or poverty or poor working conditions for those who were employed. The high frequency of articles written in the same vain indicates that editors were having the paper move away from making a change in politics or society, which can also explain why the focus on Chartism dwindled in the later issues. The CSM founders disagreed on what they and others should do to change the issues they were addressing. With Maurice firmly coming down as a conservative who valued making people into true believers of Christ and God to bring to Earth the kingdom of God to earth and the others wanting to lobby for legitimate changes to the offices and institutions that created the issues first. Though there was disagreement, these articles were intended to demonstrate the need for God in their daily lives that many had disregarded due to a number of factors such as the meta-narrative of the Enlightenment in which science trumped religion or the Church’s treatment of non-intellectuals and those not a part of the clergy.

To rebut the Church’s actions towards those of lower classes the CSM included articles that spoke to them directly and explained that the people had a role in their government that came from God. Thus they were creating connections between politics and religion as was promised in “Prospectus” that would demonstrate the necessity of belief in God. “Rights and Duties” did just that. Ludlow however does not use the same format as much of the before mentioned articles do but begins with referencing God in the beginning of the article. He did not follow the same technique because this was an article in which the author spoke to his audience. He wanted to create the bond between man and God from the beginning of the article to capture the reader’s interest. The author begun by explaining that for the article he would like to replace
the word duty with right. By doing so the author’s argument is that individuals have an obligation to follow God rather than if it was a right, that individuals would have a choice on whether to follow God or not. Here the author never fully explains what people are to do, or what the specific duties to God entailed. This is not due to lack of clarity on the author’s part but the desire to leave the final action with the people. With the letters sent into the publication the letters both ended with the reader relinquishing their say in the matter to the authors of *Politics* and the leaders of the CSM. Here the CSM dictates the message broadcasted to the audience but the action as a result of this message resides with the readers. The only thing made particularly clear is the idea that men are the children of God and therefore they are obligated to trust in the power of God who gave humans life.\(^{26}\) This idea is reflective of what the end result of this publication looked like, because while intellectuals and scholars argued for reason over faith and science over trust in God the CSM needed a way to make their theology known to lower classes outside of the Church. *Politics* was an effective means for spreading the Gospel because it was a material item that held ideas and positions that individuals could grapple with on their own time just as the bible or other religious texts that became foundations of people’s beliefs. This publication was not to replace the Bible, but serve a similar purpose in which it really makes a case for God existing, and the CSM used *Politics* in Victorian England to combat atheism and lack of belief.

The later half of the publication contains very carefully crafted messages, unlike the beginning half, which had a bit more give and take between different authors and the authors and readers. This is very telling when examining a few particular articles that presented as articles authored by readers, but were actually written by fellow members of clergy. Now it could be that

\(^{26}\) “Rights and Duties,” *Politics* 6 (June 1848): 105.
these reverends were readers of the publication and sent in work with the hope of being published because they believed they had something to add to the publication, however what is interesting is that the members of clergy who did write hid their true identity. The first case is with the article titled “Radicalism of the Penny Politics,” which is signed simply by “A stanch supporter” who was in actuality Reverend C.S. Fanshaw who was the Chaplain of the Southampton Workhouse and Rector of All Saints Parish. Fanshaw lends an interesting voice in the second half of the publication because he provides a commentary on how Politics was seen in the time in which it was published. According to his article many saw the CSM as being radical, however Fanshaw explains that the only radicalism he sees is a conservative viewpoint that encourages people to look at the “roots” of their society rather than recreating society or “The national tree.” This should not be interpreted as an attempt to manipulate the reader into thinking the author was a working class man, as themselves, and therefore they should possibly share his view for his lack of desire for action on the part of the lower classes. He made that evident when regarding the “national tree” simile he wrote: “They would like to pull up the old root and set in the strong branches of the working and other classes, with the hope that a new tree would spring up.” The author’s opinion is that lower classes would like to replace the institutions of the present society by mobilizing the working class, then hopefully the lower classes would be able to live a better life. However Fanshaw hiding his identity, and therefore his title as a clergy member that ran a workhouse, is important to acknowledge how to interpret his intentions. This is because workhouses were not typically depicted in a positive manner, but it

27 Edward Lanham, Henry Norrington, William Hickman, Guardians of the Southampton Incorporation to The Poor Law Board, June 2, 1853, Local Government Board and predecessors: Correspondence with Poor Law Unions and Other Local Authorities, The National Archives.gov.uk.
28 “Radicalism of the Penny Politics,” Politics 9 (June 1848): 159.
29 ibid.
was the state and Church’s only solution put forth to aid the poor. The “old root” to which he refers to would then include the Church and state institutions that employed him. It can be determined that if he wrote as the Southampton Workhouse Chaplain, his views would have been ignored by a majority of the Politics audience because his position was seen as being on the decidedly opposite side of the working class. As a supporter of the publication he was just a reader sharing an opinion and therefore not compromising the overall view the audience had of Politics or the CSM.

Fanshaw was not the only clergy member to contribute under a guise; Revered Sydney Godolphin Osborne wrote in as well, though he is better known to readers as Sam Gorze. He authored an article titled “Sam Gorze’s Country Letters No.1” in which the reader is led to believe that the author is a field laborer in the country that feels as though others not in gentry or the working class were ignored and he is one of many that just need others to recognize the woes of the underprivileged. As the CSM had recognized with the working class, but not the underclasses, Gorze or Osborne pushed for more attention to those of more destitute states. Just as with the article by “the stanch supporter” Osborne did not share his real identity with the readers in an attempt to come off lower class individual, a common person rather than a member of the clergy. As a pseudo member of the lower classes Osborne shared a point of view that did not advocate radical change but suggested enough to elevate underclass status to that of the working class. Rather than barely surviving individuals would improve their lot. Throughout the

30 Clark, 153. Poor houses or work houses were institutions put in place as a stipulation of the new Poor Law. The houses were meant to be an opportunity for the poor to work and no longer depend on the State for complete assistance.

letter he continued to acknowledge the Queen, not God, as being the superior power and he ends his letter with a plead to her to

[... ] have pity on us, give us laws which shall secure a fair chance of health in our dwellings, a fair field into which we may carry our labour, that we may obtain the wages which shall give us a hardworking man’s food - bread and meat; a Christian’s shelter - a decent dwelling.32

That is not a call for radical change but a request for greater equality among the less privileged classes. This plea falls in line with the narrative that the CSM was creating through Politics which was to be good Christians and trust in God but not upset the political infrastructure of Victorian England. This article was included so early on in the publication, because it sounded as though a member of the lower class was agreeing with the CSM’s ultimate message of inaction and that that came about via the opportunity to dialogue in Politics. Both of these articles, whether written with the intent to manipulate the readership or not, solidified the message of the CSM among the lower classes.

To the Victor Goes the Spoils

When Politics was coming to an end, three months after it had begun, the editors included many articles that were reflective in nature and provided a conclusion to the narrative they had crafted. They reiterated to their readers, the people of their personal relationship with God and gave the people the responsibility of taking action to make a change for the better. The CSM could not articulate what that change would be. The last article of the last issue was titled “More. Last Words.” and there is no signature attached to it. As the punctuation and language in

the title demonstrates, there are two ideas evident in this article. The first is that though the publication was ending the work and faith was not. The author wrote at the end of the article that people are to speak the words “ [...] as are given us to speak.” It is to be assumed that the source of those words is God and thus as long as God exists in some dimension of society so does the work of a Christian. The other prevalent idea is that for the CSM, this was possibly their last chance to have a platform in which to spread their message of the Christian faith and advocate for religion in a struggling society. Therefore the author took that article as an opportunity to address concerns that the writers had failed to achieve their goals, by stating that the publication was their goal; Politics had to be published and had to exist to provide a voice for those unheard in Victorian England. However the unheard did not only mean the working class but those in the clergy that had not played a part in the State Church that dismissed those of lower classes and abused the poor.

The author also mentions the party system and this last article then reads much like another article of the last issue titled “We Want Leaders.” This article was a last attempt to convince readers that men in position of power should accept God as the superior power, for if they do that they can change the political and social condition of England for the better. This is very reminiscent of the idea behind the ship Captain metaphor. That is because the editors did not want the CSM to be like the Chartist movement in which the members took action and created more disfunction rather than creating a viable solution, thus the responsibility of taking action was put onto the readers. The article does not differ much from the other political based

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33 The punctuation in the title, that it’s not More Last Words followed by a period but “More. [period mark] Last Words.[period mark],” which implies that this article contains two ideas. One pertaining to “More” and the other pertaining to “Last Words,”

34 “More Last Words,” Politics 17 (July 1848): 284.
articles that were included throughout the publication because none of the articles take a highly
definitive stand on many topics, except for a few that examined the New Poor Law and
education. Even then the authors really only examine the problems associated with those topics
but do not provide an even possible solution, and this really stems from the disagreements
between the founders in regard to what should be done. Many scholars have determined that
Maurice was conservative and therefore when it came to social change he did not advocate for
new legislation or political institutions but only creating more dependence on Christianity in
order for the world to cause the kingdom of Christ. 35

In the eleventh issue Maurice announced that Politics for the People was coming to an
end. He used that article to create a final tone for the work that was to follow that issue. He
began by thanking readers and the publisher, for allowing it to go on as long as it did. Maurice
then stated that they, the CSM, never stray from that purpose, therefore the subtle change in
direction the issues take was less of a conscious choice as one that came about due to the climate
in which this was produced. This article is one of the most honest pieces produced by one of the
founding members because terribly unapologetic for the authors expressing their opinions
throughout the publication. The authors worked on this project because they believed in their
cause, which was to organize people around the need for God and faith in their lives because
Christianity was central to their publication. As Maurice wrote: “We believe [...] that Christianity
is a dream and a lie if there is not a language in which all men may be addressed, as carrying the
same evil nature, as sharing the same deliverance from it,”36 thus the publication was not even as
concerned with providing people with knowledge of Christianity but true faith in it as a religion

35 Scholars such as Brose and Jones recognize Maurice’s conservative nature as a basis for his view of theology.
Maurice favored less action, in terms of social revolution, and believed that the Kingdom of Christ could be brought
to earth by power of faith.
that could benefit its’ believers. Here Maurice is speaking directly to the audience, the working class, and though he mostly takes responsibility for the opinions they put on display through the publication he essentially leaves readers wanting more. He or another author could have used that announcement to begin a last brief campaign that lobbied for some substantial act such as throwing out the Poor law or championing for better conditions of the workhouses, however he left it as a notice that Politics would soon cease to be and continued to publish articles that continued to speak on the presence of God but not much else.

Over the course of three months this religious political organization left a publicly accessible trace of their narrative. Scholarship such as this paper examined work not typically included in greater narratives of that period. When opportunities arise to examine stories such as this it quickly discredits the saying that to the victors go the spoils because who is defined as a victor and what are the spoils they gain? Maybe the history that is usually taught, read, and discussed has become accepted as the popular narrative and not many others have chosen to look for the other side. There are multiple interpretations and competing narratives regarding the same historical event or person. When Politics ended the CSM did not; they went on to publish another news letter and when parting ways the founders continued to successfully make names for themselves in their particular interests and fields. For example Maurice went on to found the Working Men’s College with Ludlow and Hughes among the cofounders, and it was among the first of adult education in England. Some of the men continued writing about theology and are now know for their literary and scholarly contributions such as with Kingsley’s Alton Locke published in 1849.

What is most important is that Politics still remains, as evidence of a faction of people that challenged ideas of their age and culture and made a case for God. Specifically a higher
power that loved them and cared for them, not just any superior being, in front of an audience that felt betrayed and abandoned by the society they lived in, the clergy they had looked to, and the political institutions that dictated their lives. What set the CSM and Politics for the People apart was their use of theology unlike other secular contemporaries. In their particular narrative the CSM founders and authors wrote to the middle class about Christianity with the hope that faith would be a significant factor in the men’s lives and would be sufficient in a time of turmoil and doubt.
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