

An Examination of Joel Edmund Anderson's *Christianity and the (R)evolution in Worldviews*

Christopher M. Hansen

Introduction

There are, unfortunately, few textbooks on history and philosophy for secondary school education which provides adequate and updated perspectives on various issues from ancient to modern life. This relative dearth of decent volumes handling these issues prompted Dr. Joel Edmund Anderson, an Old Testament professor at the University of North Alabama and previous high school teacher, to write *Christianity and the (R)evolution in Worldviews in Western Culture* in answer.¹ In the following essay, I wish to provide an examination of this text.

Anderson claims, himself, that part of his goals in this volume are to challenge “the modern Enlightenment narrative of the past that most of us just blindly accept.”² This includes concepts like the ‘Dark Ages’ and what he claims is “the narrative that essentially says that the ancient Pagan societies of Greece and Rome were wonderful, but then when Christianity gained dominance we were plunged into the ‘dark ages’ of religion and superstition.”³ What has given Anderson this impression of the ‘modern narrative’ is unknown, as concepts such as the ‘dark ages’ and similar have been challenged fervently for decades and most modern medievalists and historians do not use such concepts, and further, the concept of the “dark ages” actually traces itself back to medieval Christians themselves.⁴ So from the outset, Anderson already makes it clear that his work is functioning from a rather dated and non-current perspective on history.

Christopher M. Hansen is a student at Saginaw Valley State University, studying Writing and Philosophy, with interest in Biblical scholarship, Tolkien studies, and Feminist and Queer theoretical approaches to literature.

¹ Joel Edmund Anderson, *Christianity and the (R)evolution in Worldviews in Western Culture* (Hoover: Archdeacon, 2019).

² Anderson, *Christianity*, p. iii.

³ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. iii.

⁴ Janet Nelson, ‘The Dark Ages’, *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 63 (2007), pp. 191–201.

Evaluating volumes such as these, which are meant for laypeople and as an introduction to various topics, is essential for determining how they can either undermine or perpetuate cultural stereotypes, old/new models of history, or serve as polemical indoctrination for people, and this volume, as will be argued, stands as an example of the latter. It perpetuates numerous notable myths about the history of the world, rarely attempts to alert readers to the debates in historical fields (which should be considered necessary when dealing with controversial subjects), and further relies on a largely confessional Christian view of history in general (only citing twenty-six books in total, most of which are from popular publishers or confessional houses). A ramification of this is that the book presents a flat, and unnuanced view of Christian history, that overlooks or justifies (or ignores) harsher aspects of Christianity's past, while condemning non-Christians fervently. That this volume is intended for laypeople (and originally for youth audiences) makes it all the more important to address.

Rome, Israel, and Early Christianity

Much of Anderson's work is inaccurate of non-conservative Christian positions, and things which he deems to not conform to a 'Western' worldview.⁵ What exactly qualifies as 'Western' is left vague and undefined, as though self-evident (though the term is anything but such), but often seems to come down traditional historiographical trends from several decades ago of describing 'Western' culture as arising out of Judaism and 'Classical' (specifically Greek and Roman) cultures, but only very select parts of those. Later, it comes to encompass very specific neo-liberal (in the economic sense) positions, with Anderson showing a staunch dislike of socialism, communism, and Marxism (even though the latter is the product of German intellectuals in the nineteenth century). Thus, what is 'Western' for Anderson

⁵ What "Western culture" is exactly is left undefined by Anderson. This term is anomalous enough that many critical theoreticians note it has no practical application in historical study, but instead seems to serve the purpose of political and ideological polemic. See Enrico Ferri, *The Myth of Western Civilization: The West as an Ideological Category and Political Myth* (New York: Nova, 2021). Ferri analyzes in depth how one cannot derive any continuous sense of a 'Western civilization' in history, and shows rather concretely how traditionally non-Western groups, like Phoenicians and Arabs, made intense lasting impacts on Europe to the point of being inseparable in any meaningful sense. Other scholars have challenged the concept of 'Western civilization' as well. See John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Nicholas Harrison, *Our Civilizing Mission: The Lessons of Colonial Education* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), pp. 285–318.

seems to serve typical political and ideological convictions, rather than as a cohesive and descriptive category for historical analysis. The historical analysis itself as a result suffers from a lack of any critical framework, and even more suffers from numerous inaccuracies and outdated models of the past.

With regard to ancient history, Anderson attempts to rewrite and ignore the consensus scholarship and developments on Old and New Testament research, as well as that on Pagan religions. For example, Anderson's claim that as the Greco-Roman gods did not provide a "suitable foundation for society"⁶ this eventually led to the downfall of Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic, is both a religious polemic, and further a comment devoid of acknowledging the complicated socio-political matters of these societies. What of the conflicts between the senate, Julius Caesar, and Sulla? Well, Anderson overlooks all of this. The collapse of the Roman Republic was due to one thing, summarized in a single sentence: Roman gods are not a good basis for society. On the converse, Edward J. Watts argues, based on actual historical evidence, that the reason for the collapse of the Roman Republic was in no small part because the Republic had become incapable of sustaining the vast and ever-expanding Empire effectively. Its systems were antiquated and exploited as time went onward and could not handle the strains of managing a multicultural and multiethnic and expansionistic regime.⁷ The gods were not the problem, but the system of governance was incapable of handling the socio-political strains, and further could be easily exploited, and these same types of problems have pervaded later Christian based societies as well. Likewise, the same shortcomings in his claim apply to the downfall of Athenian democracy.⁸ Acknowledging this, however, would perhaps be counterintuitive to Anderson's vague sense of the 'West', where a Christian democratic and capitalistic society is considered normal and laudatory. Anderson likewise wishes to create a picture of Pagan society as one of pure decadence, continuing the outright myth of temple prostitution and orgies which recent studies have scrutinized heavily, and worse.⁹ Anderson writes:

⁶ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 22.

⁷ Edward J. Watts, *Mortal Republic: How Rome Fell into Tyranny* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

⁸ Donald Kagan, *The Fall of the Athenian Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

⁹ Stephanie Budin, *The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Horribly violent gladiator games and the wide-variety of sexual perversions that were practiced in Pagan temples and encouraged throughout Roman society went hand in hand with the overall lack of any kind of intellectual life or quality of art and music. Who has time to discipline oneself to become truly accomplished and creative when the roar of the coliseum, the sexual delights of the Pagan temples, and the bombastic music of the cult of Dionysus called one to a life of apathy and hedonism?¹⁰

Such a portrait of ancient Rome is simply inaccurate and not informed by primary sources. For instance, Rome was hardly this bastion of sexual freedom or Bacchic ritual. In fact, Romans persecuted outright the Bacchic rites.¹¹ Further, Romans did persecute hypersexual behaviour, removed people for misconduct, and did have some strict laws on other sexual acts, and having out of control indulgences eroded one's social standing in Roman society.¹² Anderson's polemic comes from a long history of Christian claims about Roman society as this repository of social decadence, alleviated only by the arrival of Christendom. He summarizes their society as "based on belief in violent, petty, immoral gods, which in turn led to a violent, petty, immoral society."¹³ One gets the impression, then, that Anderson has a model of reality, wherein societies are based on their religions, and what religion they have dictates the outcome of that society. This model misses that while Greco-Roman cultures may have promoted their gods as integral to their state, to treat their state's fate as determined by their religion is absurd, and their troubles and collapses suffered many of the same conditions as Christian societies and empires which collapsed in turmoil. In fact, it should be noted that the Roman Empire, upon its collapse, was manifestly Christianized, even its emperors. Thus, is the Christian God now to blame? When Christian societies became brutal and genocidal, is it not their God's fault? If Anderson were consistent in his condemnations, then yes (especially as the Bible was used to justify these acts).

Another problem with his work is his treatment of Judaism and Christianity as *sui generis*. He claims that "the Jews viewed God, and the natural world, and mankind differently than any society or culture at the

¹⁰ Anderson, *Christianity*, pp. 23–24.

¹¹ R. A. Bauman, 'The Suppression of the Bacchanals: Five Questions', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, vol. 39, no. 3 (1990), pp. 334–348.

¹² Catharine Edwards, 'Unspeakable Professions: Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome', in *Roman Sexualities*, eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 66–95.

¹³ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 24.

time.”¹⁴ This claim ignores the immense amount of literature showing that the God of the Bible was viewed in very Ancient Near Eastern terms and was certainly rooted in ANE traits and characteristics. The standard consensus tends to be that Yahweh was syncretized with Canaanite gods rather frequently, particularly Baal and El, and at various points we see Canaanite mythological tropes and concepts find their way throughout the Hebrew Bible.¹⁵ Furthermore, Anderson’s idea that ancient Judaism was monotheistic in the sense of only recognizing the existence of one singular

¹⁴ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 26.

¹⁵ Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); R. Scott Chalmers, *The Struggle of Yahweh and El for Hosea’s Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008); Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Jürgen van Oorschot and Markus Witte (eds.), *The Origins of Yahwism* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019); John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton (eds.), *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Carola Kloos, *Yhwh’s Combat with the Sea* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); Jason Bembry, *Yahweh’s Coming of Age* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011); J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997); James S. Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh’s Appropriation of Baal* (London: T&T Clark, 2015); Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Robert R. Cargill, *Melchizedek, King of Sodom: How Scribes Invented the Biblical Priest-King* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Marvin H. Pope, *Probative Pontificating in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature: Collected Essays*, ed. Mark S. Smith (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994). One of the most important texts throughout the last few decades is Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also, Ulf Oldenburg, *The Conflict Between El and Ba’al in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); Marvin H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1955); C. E. L’Heureux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods: El, Ba’al and Rephaim* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979); Saul M. Olyan, ‘Is Isaiah 40-55 Really Monotheistic?’, *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, vol. 12 (2012), pp. 190–201; J. C. de Moor, ‘El, the Creator’, in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, eds. Gary Rendsburg, Ruth Adler, Milton Arfa, and Nathan H. Winter (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1980), pp. 171–188. A recent study has shown that child sacrifice was very likely practiced in Israel, as among Canaanites; see Heath D. Dewrell, *Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2018). Furthermore, Israelite and Jewish slave practices were well in keeping with Ancient Near Eastern standards of the time, including the relative brutality of chattel slavery. See Joshua Bowen, *Did the Old Testament Endorse Slavery?* (Mechanicsville: Digital Hammurabi Press, 2020); and Raymond Westbrook, *Studies in Biblical Cuneiform Law* (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 1988), pp. 89–109.

deity, is entirely incorrect and ignores the abundance of epigraphic, onomastic, archaeological, and textual evidence which suggest the complete opposite.¹⁶ In fact, recent studies show that monotheism does not describe the belief systems of even Second Temple Judaism or even Paul's writings.¹⁷ All of Anderson's attempts to treat Judaism and Christianity as *sui generis* in their environment is in stark contrast to everything anthropologists and historians have long known about the early history of Israel, which reveals a past ingrained in the cultures of the time, and even the Hebrew Bible recognizes much of this past through a polemical and mythological lens. In fact, one of Anderson's particular claims is unintentionally humorous, asserting that there were not "warring gods of nature whom human beings had to appease" when we find this to be exactly the case, even within the Bible itself.¹⁸ Yahweh levies himself petty and in conflict with the gods of Egypt and punishes an entire people for the refusal of one singular man (Pharaoh) who also had no choice on a few of those occasions as Yahweh hardened his heart.¹⁹ Improper sacrifices, worshiping other gods, etc. regularly led to a death penalty or destruction of their society. Furthermore, conflict between Yahweh and the other gods is invoked in other places as

¹⁶ For onomastic studies, see Jeaneane D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988); Scott C. Layton, *Archaic Features of Canaanite Personal Names in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); Frank L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972); and for more in-depth analysis, see Spencer L. Allen, *The Splintered Divine: A Study of Istar, Baal, and Yahweh Divine Names and Divine Multiplicity in the Ancient Near East* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015). For epigraphic studies, see Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008); H. Donner and W. Röllig (eds.), *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1971); and William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). For archaeological research, see William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); and Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

¹⁷ Paula Fredriksen, 'Philo, Herod, Paul, and the Many Gods of Ancient Jewish "Monotheism"', *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 115, no. 1 (2022), pp. 23–45; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, '4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology', *Dead Sea Discoveries*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1996), pp. 236–252; and M. David Litwa, 'The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria', in *Studia Philonica XXVI* (2014), pp. 1–27.

¹⁸ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 26.

¹⁹ Exodus 12:12, 4:21, and 7:3.

well.²⁰ Warring gods were not absent but a feature of the Hebrew Bible. Yahweh was conceptualized as a manifestly ANE deity (something which secular and Christian scholars tend to agree on), and treating him otherwise is an apologetic, rather than history.

Much of Anderson's claims about horrific practices in Ancient Rome can likewise be levied at Christendom as well, as there was not this exclusive divide between Christians and their Pagan counterparts. The mistreatment of women, children, and slavery, for instance, were widespread in early Christian practice, and recent studies have shown that many Christians welcomed, participated in, and happily upheld slave systems from late antiquity to the modern day.²¹ When it came to the sexual exploitation of slaves, Christian slave owners were just as bad as their Roman counterparts. Glancy writes:

Christian slaveholders continued to beat their slaves, even when those slaves were themselves Christian. These slaveholders also persisted in exploiting their slaves sexually. Ancient Christian theologians, who were far more likely to be slaveholders than slaves, demonstrated little if any awareness of the sexual vulnerabilities of slaves.²²

Anderson attempts to even bring St. Augustine up as an example of Christian anti-slave positions in the early church, but in reality, Augustine repeated slave holding logic and even used it as a way to victim blame female rape victims among the social elite. Glancy notes again:

Augustine implied that elite women were often arrogant in their dealings with women of lower status who could not adhere to conventional standards of chastity. God thus permitted the elite women to be subjected to the sexual violations routinely endured by slaves.²³

Anderson presents Christianity as being this force in Roman society which brought about an end to slavery, yet this is actually far more complicated. In fact, Bede and other writers attest to slavery being practiced in Rome during the life of Pope Gregory I, where they enslaved fellow

²⁰ Psalm 82.

²¹ Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Harrill J. Albert, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) are two of the best volumes on the subject.

²² Jennifer A. Glancy, 'Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies', in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, ed. Bernadette Brooten (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 144.

²³ Glancy, 'Early Christianity', p. 155.

Christians still, and what we find is that the slave trade *never went away*.²⁴ Studies instead show that the slave trade was continuous from ancient Rome and throughout Medieval Europe, and then the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Anderson's claim that "the rise of Christianity, in both the Byzantine Age (313-1054 AD) and the later High Catholic Age (1054-1517 AD) was responsible for bringing about the gradual end to the ancient institution of slavery" is manifestly false, as the practice never ended in Christendom. What is true is that Christianity changed the shape of the slave trade, but they did not end it. The only caveat was that slavery was utilized in exploitation of *non-Christians*. Enslaving the infidel was more than appreciable for Christians in the medieval world. In fact, while Roman slavery may have vanished, many Christian dominated nations practiced slavery against non-Christians throughout medieval Europe, and this was seen particularly in their enslavement of Muslim prisoners.²⁵ In fact, it should be noted, as Muldoon does, that medieval Christians justified slavery via the claim that Christ made everyone 'spiritually' equal, but not physically.²⁶ Thus, when Paul says there is neither slave nor freeman or similar, he was not talking of physical conditions to medieval Christians. I shall return to the issue of slavery again below, as Anderson makes regular attempts to overlook the attitudes and atrocities committed via the institution of slavery, as well as genocide, often in the name of Christianity. Human trafficking (for sex, labor, and other forms of exploitation) has been consistent throughout history, and Christians had a continuous part to play in its continuation, even if many were also in opposition to it.²⁷

²⁴ James Muldoon, 'Spiritual Freedom—Physical Slavery: The Medieval Church and Slavery', *Ave Maria Law Review*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2005), pp. 69–93.

²⁵ Muldoon, 'Spiritual Freedom', pp. 92–93, writes "Furthermore, the very active role of Christian merchants, especially Italians, in the slave trade reminds us that the papacy showed an interest in slavery only when it involved Christians held as slaves. Christians were not to be enslaved, only infidels. To some extent, slavery, such as in the case of the Angles whom Gregory I is said to have encountered, could even be seen in Christian terms as a positive good because those who were physically enslaved might be better off if this slavery brought them to the baptismal font and freed them from the slavery to sin."

²⁶ Muldoon, 'Spiritual Freedom', p. 69: "If freedom is so important, why did not the Christianization of Europe bring a rapid end to slavery and to the slave trade? The standard answer is that Christian liberty emphasizes spiritual liberty, freedom from sin and its consequences, not physical liberty."

²⁷ Christopher Paoletta, *Human Trafficking in Medieval Europe: Slavery, Sexual Exploitation, and Prostitution* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

As a final note, Anderson continues the trend of promoting early Christians as martyrs for Jesus in the Roman Empire, when the reality of the situation shows that they seldom were, and it was not a particularly active goal of the Romans to seek out and persecute Christians. Trajan's reply to Pliny the Younger's inquiry (Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96–97) shows that Trajan really did not care and actively told Pliny not to seek Christians out. Candida Moss' research indicates that Christian martyrdom accounts were in large part fabrications and exaggerations.²⁸ There is also a notable aspect which gets overlooked which is that some Christians evidently sought out to be martyred and tried to bring it about themselves, a practice known as *voluntary martyrdom*.²⁹ So, in effect the image of Christians being massively persecuted, and being paragons of virtue in an immoral world is overly simplistic, and Anderson's work reflects a lack of interaction with recent research on his part. This is not to say that all of Christendom be treated in a negative light, as there were some who were adamantly opposed to slavery, were martyred and persecuted, and who were progressive thinkers of their time, many in fact, and this demands a more nuanced view of Christianity in history. Anderson's black and white view of Christianity as this force purely for good is misleading and denies the more interesting and complex history it truly occupies.

Byzantium, Crusades, and Islam

There are several misnomers that Anderson promotes about ancient Islam, portraying early Muslims as illiterate barbarians sweeping across Christendom. Their intellectual developments, he claims, were due to the

²⁸ See Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (New York: HarperOne, 2013); Candida Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Candida Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). More doubts on martyrdom and persecution accounts have been forthcoming as well, see Brent Shaw, 'The Myth of the Neronian Persecution', *Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 105 (2015), pp. 73–100. While many have not found Shaw's conclusions convincing, many have now drawn scepticism about Tacitus' account being accurate and that the persecution may have had nothing to do with the Great Fire of Rome. For summary of views, see Anthony A. Barrett, *Rome is Burning: Nero and the Fire That Ended a Dynasty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), pp. 143–174. See also, David Álvarez Cineira, 'La persecución neroniana de los cristianos tras el incendio de Roma (Tácito, Anales XV)', *Salmanticensis*, vol. 66 (2019), pp. 7–50.

²⁹ Paul Middleton, 'Early Christian Voluntary Martyrdom: A Statement for Defence', *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2013), pp. 556–573.

Byzantines,³⁰ he claims that Muslims did not allow the construction of churches or synagogues,³¹ etc. Most of these claims and others are rather false. Though Anderson's writing on the Byzantine Age and such follow much in the same errant footsteps, the more egregious comments and claims come from his characterization of Muslims and the Crusades. Anderson writes of the Crusades:

Contrary to the modern narrative, they were not wars instigated by fanatical, blood-thirsty, imperial-minded European Christians intent on slaughtering innocent, peace-loving Muslims.³²

The fact is, though, that the Crusades were precipitated by an aggressive and militant Islamic onslaught that had been ongoing for 400 years, ever since the time of Muhammad himself. Islamic armies had already invaded and occupied a great swath of the Byzantine Empire, from the Middle East to North Africa and to Spain, and had countless times tried to invade Europe itself. And in the territories conquered and occupied, they reduced Christians to second-class citizens. Christians were called *dhimma*. They were forced to pay a heavy tax for being Christians, were forced to wear a certain type of clothing that identified themselves as Christians and were not allowed to worship—even in their homes—if it could be heard by any Muslim, and thus offend them.³³

Then, in the latter half of the 11th century, Muslim Turks ramped up their harassment, killing and enslaving not only Christians living in

³⁰ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 79. This is false and is a Christocentric claim, see Toby E. Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) shows much to the contrary, that Islamic preservation of ancient texts, science, and scholarship surpassed that of any of its contemporaries, and Arabia had long had a literate base, even centuries before Christendom.

³¹ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 79. This is false. Sources from the time show that Muslim nations were relatively tolerant of Christian and Jewish beliefs, as they were all identified as “people of the book” and considered spiritual kin. Saladin, in fact, became a symbol among Eastern Christians of religious tolerance, see Hannes Möhring, *Saladin: The Sultan and his times, 1138–93*, trans. S. Bachrach (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). Studies, to the contrary, show that Muslim nations treated Jews and Christians with remarkable clemency for the time, more than Latin Christians afforded Jewish minorities in their own land.

³² Anderson, *Christianity*, pp. 84–85.

³³ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 85.

Islamic-occupied territory, but also Christian pilgrims from Europe who would travel to the Holy Land to worship at Christian shrines.³⁴

Enslavement, though, apparently was not enough. The Turks also wanted to even wipe out every structural evidence of Christianity. And so, in 1009 AD, Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim ordered that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher that Constantine had built over the tomb of Christ be destroyed.³⁵

Almost everything said here is built on longstanding polemics that have been challenged by more recent research. For instance, as Thomas Asbridge notes, Christians and Muslims had lived in relative peace with each other for quite a long while, and Christian pilgrims went relatively unmolested, with most of the claims of attack and enslavement being the result of Latin Christian propaganda measures, rather than actual fact.³⁶ Asbridge writes: “The image of Muslims as brutal oppressors conjured by Pope Urban was pure propaganda—if anything, Islam had proved over the preceding centuries to be more tolerant of other religions than Catholic Christendom.”³⁷

Asbridge further notes that at the time, there was no reason to consider Islam a threat to Christendom, and even the call of Alexius Comnenus was not based on any recent substantial defeats in the area, though there was Seljuk aggression that had led to some rather substantial defeats of the Byzantine Empire and loss of territory earlier. When it came to Islam and Christianity, it appears that there really was no significant conflict based on religious identity. Asbridge writes, “As the years passed, Islam and Byzantium developed a tense, sometimes quarrelsome respect for one another, but their relationship was no more fought with conflict than that

³⁴ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 85.

³⁵ Anderson, *Christianity*, pp. 85–86.

³⁶ Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History, the Roots of Conflict Between Christianity and Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 17: “More recently, Latin Christians attempting to make devotional pilgrimages to the Levant, of whom there continued to be many, may have reported some difficulties in visiting the Holy Places, but the volume and severity of such complaints was hardly overwhelming.” When it came to native Christians, Asbridge notes, “Most significantly throughout this period indigenous Christians actually living under Islamic law, be it in Iberia or the Holy Land, were generally treated with remarkable clemency. [...] Christian subjects may not have been able to share power with their Muslim masters, but they were given freedom to worship. [...] Eastern Christendom may have been subject to Islamic rule, but it was not on the brink of annihilation, nor prey to any form of systemic abuse,” Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, p. 18.

³⁷ Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, p. 3.

between the Greeks and their Slavic or Latin neighbours to the west.”³⁸ A recent analysis by Morton indicates that the concerns Crusaders and Europe at large had about Islam was cursory at best.³⁹ The principal cause of the First Crusade was Alexius Comnenus' request for aid because of Seljuk invasion of Byzantine lands, not because of Christians being persecuted in some systemic fashion.⁴⁰ The Seljuks were simply invading Byzantium just as they had invaded numerous non-Christian and other Muslim nations. As for the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, this occurred decades before the First Crusade, and (contrary to Anderson's claims that Muslims did not allow churches to be built) it was reconstructed under Ali az-Zahir by 1048 CE, showing once again that concessions to Christians and negotiations were ongoing. It should also be noted that this was not the original Church built by Constantine. That had been burned down and destroyed by the invasion of the Sassanid Empire in 614 CE. Under Islamic rule for the first several centuries, Christian sites in Jerusalem were protected.⁴¹ It should be noted that the Christian reaction to the Church's destruction in 1009 CE was to blame Jewish minorities.⁴² There was some targeted persecution under the Fatimid Caliphate, but this was largely dissipated several decades before the First Crusade began, and (as mentioned before) Muslims and Christians lived in relative peace before the First Crusade.

One of Anderson's major claims was that the Crusades did not result in a mass and targeted persecution of minorities, nor were they out of control genocidal assaults.⁴³ Both claims are false to varying degrees. A result of the First Crusade was a targeted persecution and genocidal action taken against Jewish people in Europe and in the Holy Land. One particular site of

³⁸ Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, p. 17.

³⁹ Nicholas Morton, *Encountering Islam on the First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁴⁰ Peter Frankopan, *The First Crusade: The Call from the East* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2016) takes a more Alexius-centred history, though goes rather far. Still, the volume shows that Alexius was the one to spur the Crusades into action.

⁴¹ See Justin E. A. Kroesen, *The Sepulchrum Domini Through the Ages: Its Form and Function* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000) for history on the sepulcher.

⁴² D. Malkiel, 'Jewish-Christian relations in Europe, 840–1096', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 29 (2003), pp. 76–77.

⁴³ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 88: "Contrary to popular opinion, the Crusaders did not engage in some sort of fanatical slaughter of innocent Muslims and Jews when they took Jerusalem. They did not target the Jewish community, and according to estimates, they probably killed around 3,000 Muslims."

persecution became the Rhineland, where their numerous attempts to forcibly convert or violently attack the Jewish populations in medieval Germany occurred.⁴⁴ The First Crusade was punctuated by regular extreme violence⁴⁵ and Anderson's attempts to claim otherwise silence the victims of these tragedies. Likewise, the Sack of Jerusalem in 1099 CE led to the massacre of thousands of the Jewish and Muslim populations.⁴⁶ Crusader activities were often considered brutal even to other Christian contemporaries (indicating that Christians were not universally in favor of these tactics), i.e., their violence escalated in ways which challenged even medieval Christian conceptions and sensibilities of the time, and massacres were not even restricted to their non-Christian enemies either. During the First Crusade, indiscriminate slaughter of town inhabitants was a regular occurrence:

For example, at Barra and Maarat an-Numan, south of Antioch, Crusaders engaged in indiscriminate slaughter of the inhabitants after capturing the towns in November 1098; even those to whom the Frankish leader Bohemund had promised protection, including women and children, were either killed or sold into slavery.⁴⁷

Infanticide is likewise attested, with the dashing of children's heads against walls, which some have argued was in imitation of Psalm 137.⁴⁸

Of course, not all Christians were left horrified by these events. To the contrary, some chroniclers of the time declared that it was a wonderful thing to slaughter the non-Christians for their 'blaspheming' of the Holy Land.⁴⁹ It should be noted that not all of the atrocities committed, such as rape, enslavement, and mass murder were committed only by Crusaders. Muslim forces were likewise often as brutal during the course of the Crusades, and

⁴⁴ Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁴⁵ Jonathan Riley-Smith, 'Christian Violence and the Crusades', in *Religious Violence Between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives*, ed. Anna Sapir Abulafia (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 3–20.

⁴⁶ Benjamin Z. Kedar, 'The Jerusalem Massacre of July 1099 in the Western Historiography of the Crusades', in *Crusades*, eds. Benjamin Z. Kedar, Jonathan Phillips, Jonathan Riley-Smith (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 15–75.

⁴⁷ Eileen Dugan, "'Crescent and Cross,' Kingdom of Heaven, and the Fall of the City in 1099 and 1187', *Journal of Religion and Society Suppl. Series*, vol. 2 (2007), p. 5.

⁴⁸ Dugan, 'Crescent and Cross', p. 6.

⁴⁹ Dugan, 'Crescent and Cross', p. 6.

in engagements after, a few of which Anderson points out.⁵⁰ However, there were often times also of clemency.

Saladin, on reconquering Jerusalem in 1187 CE, declared that the violence he committed against the Crusaders and their occupying forces would be in retribution for the heinous acts committed in 1099, but later negotiated to ransom out much of the population, which spared much of it from mass violence, and sources indicate that some of Saladin's own associates helped to pay ransom, though thousands still remained in the city in the end and were then enslaved.⁵¹ As a result, one gets a somewhat different image of these two different conquests, with both images of restraint and also harsh brutality. Subsequently, Saladin began allowing Jewish and Christian pilgrims to return to the city. This is not to deny that atrocities were committed by Muslim forces, but to treat the Crusades as a defensive act against Muslim aggression, and to claim that the Christians were not responsible for indiscriminate mass murder is pseudohistorical at best and Crusader apologia at worst. The Crusaders enslaved and trafficked captives, committed indiscriminate mass murder, and their acts shocked and horrified even their fellow contemporaries at the time. The *Gesta Francorum* describes the massacre quite succinctly and horrifyingly:

They also ordered all the Saracen dead to be cast outside because of the great stench, since the whole city was filled with their corpses; and so the living Saracens dragged the dead before the exits of the gates and arranged them in heaps, as if they were houses. No one ever saw or heard of such slaughter of pagan people, for funeral pyres were formed from them like pyramids, and no one knows their number except God alone.⁵²

The Christian scribe and eyewitness Raymond d'Aguiliers wrote of the violence in such a fashion that it seems to borrow language from the Book of Revelation to try and describe it.

He wrote of the Temple of Solomon massacre, "What happened there? If I tell the truth, it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins."⁵³ One should also not neglect the cannibalism committed by Crusaders, which likewise horrified their

⁵⁰ Anderson, *Christianity*, pp. 88–89.

⁵¹ Dugan, 'Crescent and Cross', pp. 7–8.

⁵² August C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants* (Princeton: Arx Publishing, 1921), p. 262.

⁵³ Krey, *The First Crusade*, p. 261.

contemporary Christians as well. The siege of Ma'arra in 1098 was a massacre, leading to tens of thousands being slain and their bodies mutilated and parts of them consumed. Furthermore, this is not an isolated event, and cannibalism committed by Crusaders was not always in response to hunger either, as sources from the time indicate, with cannibalism at other places such as Antioch as well.⁵⁴ This was an act condemned by Christian and Muslim contemporaries alike, indicating much of the Crusader violence and their acts could not be justified by larger Christendom.

Anderson's response to these mass murders of the Crusaders is to claim, "it was nothing compared to what Muslim armies had actually done during the time of the Crusades."⁵⁵ For one, he finds significant trouble to present massacres "during the time of the Crusaders" which were ever equivalent to those of their Christian contemporaries. On one instance he states that Baybars in 1266 CE slaughtered all the Knights Templar in a fortress. In reality, Baybars slew the Templars (all but two) and spared the Hospitallers, and women and children, who were enslaved. None of this was out of the ordinary, and the massacre of the Templars paled in comparison to numerous other Crusader atrocities in terms of numbers. It was horrific and was based on a false promise of Baybars, but this is directly comparable to similar Crusader acts (often with broken treaties). Anderson's appeal to Timur/Tamerlane is also anachronistic for his own argument. The Ninth Crusade, the final one, ended before Timur was born. Thus, this was not "during the time of the Crusaders" for his argument to even be pertinent. Nor was Timur's massacre something unheard of to Christendom either. In 1182 CE, Christians in Constantinople massacred tens of thousands of their fellow (Latin) Christian populace.⁵⁶ Nicol writes:

[...] Andronikos sent in his Paphlagonian troops to incite people against the Latins. The people needed no encouragement. With an enthusiasm fired by years of resentment they set about the massacre of all foreigners they could find. [...] The slaughter was appalling. The Byzantine clergy shamelessly encouraged the mob to seek out Latin monks and priests. The Pope's legate to Constantinople, the Cardinal John, was decapitated and his severed head was dragged through the streets tied to the tail of a dog. At the end some 4000 westerners who

⁵⁴ Jay Rubenstein, 'Cannibals and Crusaders', *French Historical Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4 (2008), pp. 525–552.

⁵⁵ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 88.

⁵⁶ Marinus Ossewaarde places the death toll at 60,000 slain. See Marinus Ossewaarde, *Theorizing European Societies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 59.

had survived the massacre were rounded up and sold as slaves to the Turks.⁵⁷

To say that it was 'nothing' when compared to Muslim violence is simply inaccurate, and it attempts to make Muslims as more 'barbaric' than their contemporaries, when in reality these sides were all largely comparable in their violence during wartime conflict. Anderson is right to point out massacres committed by Muslim forces, but to pretend Crusading forces were any better is nonsensical. Massacres and genocide were not uncommon on either side of the engagements, and as a result, Anderson's attempt to paint the Crusaders as defenders of Christendom (especially as they persecuted Christian minorities and warred each other), and the Muslims as this universally aggressing force is inaccurate, as much as it would be inaccurate to attempt portraying the opposite scenario. Instead, we have a complex political situation with several sides vying for control in various regions, and it cannot be reduced to Muslim vs. Christian aggression in a cogent manner.⁵⁸ Neither side was innocent, nor was either side free from the horrors of these conflicts.

Anderson's claims about the Crusades also showcase a number of methodological errors. Firstly, treating Islam as some conglomerate by which he can say "Muslims committed X crime" is a misnomer. The Islamic world was split into numerous nations all competing with one another, and such competition was actually seen during the Crusades. In fact, the Crusaders at various times were allied with the Abbasid Caliphate in fighting other groups. So, the treatment of Muslims as some kind of conglomerate is provides a misshapen view of the Crusades and leads one to the impression this was a religious conflict, rather than a largely political one. Anderson also frequently overlooks the violence that Christians perpetrated against each other during the Crusades. The Fourth Crusade culminated in the sacking of Constantinople in 1204 CE and the end of the Byzantine Empire as a powerful entity. Likewise, Crusades against perceived 'heretical' Christian minorities led to the wide-ranging massacres of thousands of people.⁵⁹ When one looks at the *exceptionally few* sources that Anderson ever cites on the Crusades, one finds good reason as to why he has these misunderstandings of medieval history. The only sources he sites stem from often conservative

⁵⁷ Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 107.

⁵⁸ Morton, *Encountering Islam on the First Crusade* and Asbridge, *The Crusades*.

⁵⁹ For the Cathars as being a made-up entity by the Church to persecute religious minorities, see Antonio Sennis (ed.), *Cathars in Question* (York: York Medieval Press, 2016).

writers, like Rodney Stark, who has characterized himself as “committed to Western Civilization” and describes himself as a Christian.⁶⁰ The attempts to exaggerate the atrocities committed by Muslim forces, and exonerate the Crusaders seems little more than apologia, and when put in historical context, the Crusaders were often times just as (if not more) brutal than their opposition and committed acts that not even their own fellow Christians could justify at the time. The Crusaders were just as violent as their counterparts, and the Crusades were not responses to protect Christendom from destruction or for the defence of Christian pilgrims. Notably, the success of the First Crusade did not even restore Eastern Christendom, but instead, Latin Christians took domination of those regions. They were political acts, and not caused by a Muslim scourge threatening Christendom, contra Anderson’s claims. Anderson would have done well to review more current literature from leading academic sources.

Modern Issues: Slavery to Fascism

The volume does not improve when entering early modern history. Anderson writes an apologetic defence of the Inquisition.⁶¹ The fact that around as many as 60,000 people (the vast majority women) were killed, many by the Inquisition.⁶² The antisemitism of the Inquisition, likewise, he brushes aside which comes is a general trend.⁶³ Anderson frequently omits references to early Christian antisemitism, such as with Martin Luther, and his later influence on Nazi Germany.⁶⁴ Likewise, the ghettos used to subjugate Jews

⁶⁰ Massimo Introvigne, ‘A Christmas Conversation with Rodney Stark’, *CESNUR*, at https://www.cesnur.org/2007/mi_stark.htm. Published 25/01/07. Stark states, “As I continued to write about religion and continued to devote more attention Christian history, I found one day several years ago that I was a Christian. Consequently, I was willing to accept an appointment at Baylor University, the world’s largest Baptist university.” Anderson primarily only cites Stark throughout the course of his discussion of the Crusades (Anderson, *Christianity*, pp. 83, 85, 88–89). He also cites other Christian texts published by conservative publishers (pp. 87, 90–91). Only one university press book is ever cited (p. 83).

⁶¹ Anderson, *Christianity*, pp. 118–119.

⁶² Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 154.

⁶³ Adolfo Kuznitsky, *Spanish Attitudes Toward Judaism: Strains of Anti-Semitism from the Inquisition to Franco and the Holocaust* (Jefferson: MacFarland and Company, 2014) goes into detail on the Inquisition and antisemitism. See also William Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate* (Lanham: Jason Aronson, 1993).

⁶⁴ Shannon Scott, “‘The Jewish Danger’: An Exploration of Medieval Antisemitism in Die Stürmer’s Children’s Books’, *Alpata*, vol. 17 (2021), pp. 124–146; Christopher J. Probst,

are not discussed,⁶⁵ nor the proliferation of antisemitism among various church thinkers. Here, Anderson quite frequently relies on either outdated, or confessional secondary and tertiary sources, in order to make various claims, or he (most of all) simply asserts claims without any citations whatsoever. The issue of the Transatlantic slave trade is dismissed in less than three pages of Anderson's book. He opens the issue with his false claim that Christianity had abolished the Pagan slave trade, and then he seeks to try and downplay the role of Christians (particularly Roman Catholics and Protestants) in upholding and securing the colonial slave trade systems. Anderson states:

Although the full answer is far more complex than can be discussed here, the simple answer is that slavery was promoted and advocated by prominent Enlightenment thinkers. Furthermore, slavery was not only condemned by the Catholic Church from the outset of its revival in the colonies, but it was the tireless work of countless Christian abolitionists who eventually were able to once again, both in England and in the United States, abolish slavery for a second time in Western history.⁶⁶

He never seeks to pin slavery on Christian thinkers but is more than willing to condemn David Hume for his own racism and pro-slavery positions. He then claims: "By contrast, Christians spoke out forcefully against the practice of slavery right from the outset."⁶⁷ He also condemns other Christian critics like Thomas Jefferson and Voltaire. This is all, however, a false image of the past, where the vast majority of White Protestant and Catholic Christians were racist and either ambivalent toward or pro-slavery.⁶⁸ For instance, he ignores that the official Catholic position under Pius II and his successors was not that slavery itself was unallowed,

Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

⁶⁵ Daniel B. Schwartz, *Ghetto: The History of a Word* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

⁶⁶ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 184.

⁶⁷ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 184.

⁶⁸ Douglas A. Jones, *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Pro-Slavery Imagination of the Antebellum North* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014). See also Alden T. Vaughn, 'The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth-Century Virginia', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 97, no. 3 (1989), pp. 311–354, esp. 311 writes, "Colonial Virginia held no monopoly on either slavery or racism, of course. Both were endemic in Europe's American Colonies from the sixteenth century on, and neither depended on Virginia's example for its vitality and longevity, even within the British Empire."

but that slavery of *Christians* was not allowed.⁶⁹ Pope Nicholas and Pope Calixtus III and numerous others all also ordained the slavery of non-Christians and their decrees were continuously upheld by later Popes. When colonization of the ‘New World’ began, Pope Alexander VI gave the Spanish permission to subdue and enslave all the populace of the Americas.⁷⁰ Christopher Columbus, a famously devout Catholic who was granted a coat of arms by Pope Alexander VI, came to the Americas where he enslaved, raped, and pillaged.⁷¹ At various points, he was known to give indigenous women and children to crew members to sexually assault, but also committed atrocities against his fellow Spanish colonists as well. All of this was, of course, allowed by the Papal bulls which extended enslavement and brutality rights to the Spanish and Portuguese. Then there was the Spanish *Requerimiento* enacted in 1513 which stated that all peoples they found in South America had to forcibly convert to Roman Catholicism on the pain of death. Mass genocide was widespread among the Spanish Catholic forces.⁷² Slave owning was so prominent that Pope Urban VIII in the seventeenth century personally owned several slaves himself.⁷³

In reality, Southern Christians in the United States, as much as Anderson would like to say otherwise, were the rule not the exception when it came to racism. Northern Christians were racist and did not wish to grant people of color equal rights. Most Northerners were opposed to emancipation initiatives,⁷⁴ which caused great trouble for the Lincoln administration. Southern Christians (especially Southern Baptists) on the other hand made frequent and startling use of the Bible in order to justify the enslavement of

⁶⁹ Paul Finkelman and Seymour Drescher, ‘Killing the Vampire in Human Culture: Slavery as a Problem in International Law’, in *Comparative Legal History*, eds. Aniceto Masferrer, Kjell A. Mod  er, and Olivier Mor  teau (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2019), pp. 284–317, specifically 286.

⁷⁰ Diana Hayes, ‘Reflections on Slavery’, in *Change in Official Catholic Moral Teachings*, ed. Charles E. Curran (New York: Paulist, 2003), pp. 65–76, specifically 67.

⁷¹ Laurence Bergreen, *Columbus: The Four Voyages, 1492-1504* (New York: Penguin, 2012) details Columbus’ life and horrors of his voyages in detail.

⁷² Eitan Ginzberg, *The Destruction of the Indigenous Peoples of Hispano America: A Genocidal Encounter* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2018).

⁷³ Pius Onyemehi Adiele, *The Popes, the Catholic Church and the Transatlantic Enslavement of Black Africans, 1418-1839* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2017), pp. 385–386, details in depth the Papal support of the slave trade and notes how specifically how Urban purchased slaves and participated in the slave trade actively.

⁷⁴ Jones, *The Captive Stage*.

Black people. Solomon Northup, a free man who had been abducted and sold, wrote this about one such slave master, Peter Tanner:

Like William Ford, his brother-in-law, Tanner was in the habit of reading the Bible to his slaves on the Sabbath, but in a somewhat different spirit. He was an impressive commentator on the New Testament. The first Sunday after my coming to the plantation, he called them together, and began to read the twelfth chapter of Luke. When he came to the 47th verse, he looked deliberately around him, and continued—"And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself"—here was another pause—"prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

"D'ye hear that?" demanded Peter, emphatically, "Stripes," he repeated, slowly and distinctly, taking off his spectacles, preparatory to making a few remarks.

"That nigger that don't take care—that don't obey his lord—that's his master—d'ye see?—that 'ere nigger shall be beaten with many stripes. Now, 'many' signifies a great many—forty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty lashes. That's scripiter!" and so Peter continued to elucidate the subject for a great length of time, much to the edification of his sable audience.⁷⁵

The usage of Christianity and the Bible were integral in the upholding of the slave trade and attempting to pacify and subjugate slaves. Christians were not uniformly or universally in favor of slavery, nor were they all universally against emancipation, but Christianity was widely used to justify slavery and many other heinous acts. Anderson's claims also that former slaves joined Baptist and Methodist congregations "for they were the ones who helped secure their freedom" is unnuanced and lacks attention to the historical circumstances of slaves after emancipation.⁷⁶ The reality is that as many slaves had no money, no trade, and both the North and South were still supremely racist, many of them had to continue work (for excruciatingly low wages) on the plantations of their ex-masters.⁷⁷ As a result, proximity may be one key factor in why they ended up in those churches, not because those churches were emancipatory or aided them. Further, Methodists and Baptists

⁷⁵ Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, eds. Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), p. 186.

⁷⁶ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 186.

⁷⁷ Herman Mark Schwartz, *States Versus Markets: Understanding the Global Economy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), chapter 6, digital edition unpaginated.

were prolific in spreading their faith among *slaves*, including to reinforce slavery, as seen above. Thus, many would have taken up the religion that was forced on them. Oftentimes, Black congregations had to be overseen by White ministers to ensure that they did not violate White Southern Christian sensibilities of the time.⁷⁸ Anderson's view of Christianity and its role in the slave trade in the Americas and abroad distorts the role of Christianity (particularly the Roman Catholic and Baptist churches) in its perpetuation. It is true that there were several Christian ministers and White people that did vehemently oppose slavery and favored total emancipation and equality. But they were exceptions to a general rule.

Anderson spends only a singular paragraph on the interactions with Native Americans, only to brush aside all atrocities committed. He emphasizes Christian missionaries (ignoring that missionaries attempting to convert Natives was still erasing their non-Christian religion and culture; to Christianize them) and how some of them were persecuted for resisting the Trail of Tears. But these exceptions do not prove a general rule, and Anderson silences the victims of these atrocities and the role of Christians *en masse* in them. A recent assessment indicates that colonialization from Europe, genocide, and spreading of disease killed upwards of 55 million indigenous people in North, South, and Central America.⁷⁹ We have some evidence to suggest that smallpox was used as a biological weapon deliberately, though how widespread and frequent is debated.⁸⁰ One passage from Thomas Hariot is somewhat eye-opening on the issue:

There was no town where we had any subtle device practiced against us, we leaving it unpunished or not revenged (because we sought by all means possible to win them by gentleness) but that within a few days after our departure from every such town, the people began to die very fast, and many in short space; in some towns about twenty, in

⁷⁸ Amina Luqman-Dawson, *African Americans of Petersburg* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2008), p. 35.

⁷⁹ Alexander Koch, Chris Brierley, Mark Maslin, and Simon Lewis, 'Earth system impacts of the European arrival and Great Dying in the Americas after 1492', *Quaternary Science Reviews*, vol. 207 (2019), pp. 13–36.

⁸⁰ Kristine B. Patterson and Thomas Runge, 'Smallpox and the Native American', *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 323, no. 4 (2002), pp. 216–222; V. Barras and G. Greub, 'History of biological warfare and bioterrorism', *Clinical Microbiology and Infection*, vol. 20 (2014), pp. 497–502; Hugh A. Dempsey, 'Smallpox: Scourge of the Plains', in *Disasters in Western Canada: Harm's Way*, eds. Anthony Rasporich and Max Foran (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), pp. 35–37.

some forty, in some sixty, and in one six score, which in truth was very many in respect of their numbers. This happened in no place that we could learn but where we had been, where they used some practice against us, and after such time; The disease also so strange, that they neither knew what it was, nor how to cure it; the like by report of the oldest men in the country never happened before, time out of mind. A thing specially observed by us as also by the natural inhabitants themselves.

Insomuch that when some of the inhabitants which were our friends and especially the Wiroans Wingina had observed such effects in four or five towns to follow their wicked practices, they were persuaded that it was the work of our God through our means, and that we by him might kill and slay whom we would without weapons and not come near them.⁸¹ [spelling updated by myself]

He continues on to describe that the Natives would then entreat these Christians to pray to their God and stop any such hostilities and calamities befalling them, to which Hariot says that they told the inhabitants that God did as he pleased, and they were servants of him, and it would be better for them to “be made partakers of his truth and serve him in righteousness.”⁸² Anderson also neglects that the ideology of Manifest Destiny, a term coined by a Christian minister and upheld by largely among White Christians as declaring that it was the will of God that the United States conquer North America and its inhabitants, and subjugate them.⁸³ It is unnuanced to simply say that Christianity was the cause of this, or that all White Christians were in favour of these genocides and atrocities, but it is likewise unnuanced to exempt them and remove the responsibility of (mostly) White Christians for the huge swathes of atrocities committed. By doing this, Anderson seeks to alleviate Christian responsibility and also silences the lived experiences of the victims of these acts.

Moving ahead, Anderson moves into the territory of attempted character assassination and other problems when discussing Karl Marx and Marxism in general. For instance, while he occasionally gets some concepts correct, he describes the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as “a select few among the proletariat (i.e., the elite) [who] should decide what is best for

⁸¹ Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (London, 1588), p. 41.

⁸² Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*, p. 42.

⁸³ John D. Wilsey, “‘Our Nation is Destined to be the Great Nation of Futurity’: John L. O’Sullivan’s Manifest Destiny and Christian Nationalism, 1837–1846”, *MDPI Religions*, vol. 8, no. 4 (2017).

everyone.”⁸⁴ This is an oversimplification at best. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Marx’s view seemed to be a series of figures elected via direct democracy (i.e., the people directly elected individuals), who could be recalled for corruption, and he advocated the entirety of the people be involved in the process of government.⁸⁵ Anderson’s claims, however, seem not to be influenced by actually having read Marx but instead (Young Earth Creationist) Benjamin Wiker’s volume entitled *10 Books That Screwed Up the World*.⁸⁶ This polemical volume is largely a conservative polemical tome on various influential volumes on philosophy, biology, and sociology. Wiker lists the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels, *The Descent of Man* by Darwin, *Utilitarianism* by John Stuart Mill, and *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan as among all these volumes which “screwed up the world.” Often, these evaluations focus on (incorrect) views on various authors’ private lives and would insult their character for things only consequential to conservative moral values, which is consistent throughout. Anderson follows suit in this character assassination. He claims, for instance:

The irony of Marx’s life was that the man who championed the common worker, hardly ever worked a day in his life. He simply refused to get a job. Instead, he lived off an inheritance from his father; and then when that ran out, he was supported by his fellow communist collaborator, Frederick Engels [sic], who had inherited his father’s textile business. That is right, Engels, for all practical purposes, was a rich, industrial capitalist, and Marx benefited from it. Instead of working at a job to support his family, Marx mooched off his communist/capitalist friend and wrote about the destruction of the system that supported him.⁸⁷

This is, of course, not true, and far more nuanced in reality. Firstly, Anderson attacks Marx, a disabled man who lived throughout much of his life with chronic health problems, such as terrible skin disease which was

⁸⁴ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 195.

⁸⁵ Monty Johnstone, ‘The Paris Commune and Marx’s Conception of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat’, *Massachusetts Review*, vol. 12 (1971), pp. 447–462.

⁸⁶ Anderson cites him numerous times, see *Christianity*, pp. 234, 235, 239, 241–242, 245, 247–248. Anderson also frequently cites Wiker’s other polemical tome entitled *Worshipping the State* (2013); see *Christianity*, pp. 33, 149, 151, 154, 156, 169, 171–172. Most of Wiker’s same polemics and character assassinations of figures like Marx and others can be found in Anderson’s work. Benjamin Wiker is most infamous for writing critically panned volumes, such as his biography of Darwin, which was criticized for rarely even using primary sources, see John M. Lynch, ‘Reviewed work: *The Darwin Myth* by Benjamin Wiker’, in *Journal of the History of Biology*, vol. 43 (2010), pp. 609–611.

⁸⁷ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 195.

debilitating.⁸⁸ Speculations abound as to his ailments, but Marx could be, in today's world considered thoroughly disabled by his conditions.⁸⁹ Also, Marx early on worked as a journalist, and had plans to become an academic but his plans were barred from fruition. That inheritance that Marx received, around a third of it went to arming Belgian workers to fight for their rights.⁹⁰ Additionally, we need to factor in the fact that Marx was Jewish in an antisemitic world. Lastly, Marx worked tirelessly his whole life, *as a writer*. If Marx “hardly ever worked a day in his life” while being a hugely prolific writer, can one then conclude that Anderson's own book does not count as ‘work’ (in which case, should not his volume be freely available)? Anderson gives the impression that the only labour which counts is labour in favour of capitalism. Anderson's comments on Engels being a part of capitalism also are not particularly nuanced. If Engels did not work, he would have perished in poverty. Anderson should have consulted the rather vast readily available and affordable volumes written on Marx's life.⁹¹ Other errors also abound. The idea that Marx and Engels pinned all societal issues on the economy⁹² is wrong and shows that Anderson is not versed in their writings. As Engels wrote:

[...] if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure [...] also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form.⁹³

Anderson likewise confuses the nature of dialectical materialism with historical materialism, which are two different (though related) concepts. He says “he [Marx] viewed history as that of an evolution of economic struggle—i.e. dialectical materialism.”⁹⁴ Dialectical Materialism, on the

⁸⁸ S. Shuster, ‘The nature and consequence of Karl Marx's skin disease’, *British Journal of Dermatology*, vol. 158, no. 1 (2008), pp. 1–3.

⁸⁹ For definitions of disability, see Roddy Slorach, *A Very Capitalist Condition: A History and Politics of Disability* (London: Bookmarks, 2016), pp. 15–26.

⁹⁰ Leigh Weber, *Western Political Thought* (Waltham: Ed Tech Press, 2018), p. 225.

⁹¹ Biographies of Marx abound. See Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York: Liveright, 2013); Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2016); and Francis Wheen, *Karl Marx: A Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

⁹² Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 194.

⁹³ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, *Historical Materialism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972).

⁹⁴ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 194.

converse, is a system of interpretation in terms of contradictions and solutions and is not limited to class or economic analysis. Contradiction here does not indicate some true or false scenario though, but “points to the unity and conflict of opposites that drive development within a given entity or process.”⁹⁵ Historical Materialism is an extension of this and more akin to what Anderson seems to have in mind. Barbara Foley writes: “‘Historical materialism’, the term Engels used to describe his and Marx’s approach to analyzing society and history, is premised upon the notion that the modes of production shaping how people live and think are constantly undergoing change.”⁹⁶

These distinctions are somewhat important, because dialectical materialism, for Marx, was more a scientific method, rather than simply a way of looking at history in and of itself. Marx’s historical materialism is instead what describes Marx’s views on how history was largely governed by economic processes, specifically tensions of class struggle and changes in the modes of production.⁹⁷ Of course, Anderson’s principal aim is to then accuse Marx of creating an amoral system of thought, which led to his ‘disciples’ massacring millions of people, in no small part because “since there was no God and therefore no real right and wrong or good and evil (but only the constant dialectic of materialistic and economic forces).”⁹⁸ As part of this, Anderson attributes a fake quote to Marx, specifically “perish in a revolutionary holocaust.”⁹⁹ Marx said no such thing, and it appears to have been fabricated using different passages of Marx’s and Engels’ works.¹⁰⁰ The reality, also, is that it is simply nonsensical to blame the Maoist and Stalinist regimes on Marx or Classical Marxists in general. Classical Marxists were (and are) vehemently opposed to those regimes and treating them as a conglomerate would be as though treating all Christians under Nazi Germany as being in favour of Adolf Hitler, or all Christians as condoning slavery or the mass violence of the Crusades. In reality Classical Marxists were deeply

⁹⁵ Barbara Foley, *Marxist Literary Criticism Today* (London: Pluto, 2019), p. 11.

⁹⁶ Foley, *Marxist*, p. 4.

⁹⁷ For more on Marxist historical theory, see Paul Blackledge, *Reflections on the Marxist Theory of History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

⁹⁸ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 196.

⁹⁹ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁰ Otávio Pinto, “‘Revolutionary holocaust’: Did Marx write this?’, *BLOG DO OTÁVIO*, at <https://otaviopinto.com/index.php/2016/08/04/did-marx-write-this/>. Published 04/08/16.

opposed to these regimes.¹⁰¹ It should be noted that Anderson's further discussion on this is entirely hinged on the validity of this fake quote. He writes:

That is why it is utterly baffling when some people try to distance the atrocities of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao from Karl Marx, by claiming they distorted Marx's philosophy—because it was Marx himself who stated that not only did the bourgeoisie have to be annihilated, but also that countless groups of people who were not yet sufficiently advanced to accept the dictatorship of the proletariat would simply have to be wiped out.¹⁰²

His attempts to conglomerate and condemn all Marxists, Stalinists, Maoists, Leninists, and so on as a singular whole is merely polemical. As a final issue, Anderson misunderstands the conception of the “opium of the people.” Marx did *not* mean that “religion was an entirely bourgeois concept that was forced upon the poor proletariat masses.”¹⁰³ Instead, Marx wrote that, “Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions.”¹⁰⁴ For Marx, religion among the poor was a protest against the suffering and oppression they suffered, not merely a tool of oppression, that Anderson claims he conceptualized it as. Religion is not manifestly wrong or bad, but in fact can aid in “an active moral agency.”¹⁰⁵ Anderson would have done well to have consulted Raines' edited volume *Marx on Religion*.

On the issue of Nazi Germany and Hitler, once again, Anderson does no better than before, and once again attempts to pin the blame on Marx. Nazism, Anderson claims, was “National Socialist” and therefore it was a “nationalized form of the international socialism of Marx, Lenin, and the Communists.”¹⁰⁶ He says the only difference was that Marx wanted to destroy class, and Hitler wanted to destroy non-Aryan races.¹⁰⁷ He then states: “Other than that, both consisted of a dictatorship that oversaw every aspect of society and was dedicated to achieving his socialist goals no matter

¹⁰¹ Matt Perry, *Marxism and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 20–28.

Terry Eagleton describes Stalinism as a “monstrous caricature of socialism”; see *Why Marx was Right* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 19.

¹⁰² Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 197–198.

¹⁰³ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁴ John Raines, *Marx on Religion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Raines, *Marx on Religion*, pp. 5–6.

¹⁰⁶ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 243.

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 243.

the cost. Hitler even got his idea for his concentration camps from the USSR's use of the gulag."¹⁰⁸

All of this is incorrect. Firstly, Marxism wishes to abolish the system of private property, while Nazi Germany saw the largest increase in privatization in Europe.¹⁰⁹ It did not attempt to dismantle the systems of economic class, as Anderson admits. Nazism was stringently built on class hierarchies, and the Nazi officials often came from wealthy and aristocratic backgrounds, such as the Junkers. Furthermore, while Nazis and Laissez Faire capitalists may not have always gotten along, they were far from enemies. Robert O. Paxton notes, on the converse, "That there was some mutual advantage is beyond doubt. Capitalism and fascism made practicable bedfellows (though not inevitable ones, nor always comfortable ones)."¹¹⁰ Passmore concurs, "capitalists and many fascists believed a strong capitalism to be in the national interest" and that fascist regimes "saw big business as essential to war production, and gave such firms priority in the allocation of raw materials and labour."¹¹¹ In fact, if one traces the intellectual history of Nazism, one finds its roots in the Far-Right nationalism that had been developing in Germany since the nineteenth century.¹¹² As a note, Marxists in particular were targeted and massacred by Nazis, and the entire concept of 'cultural Marxism' as spread today began as an antisemitic conspiracy theory known as 'cultural Bolshevism' in Nazi Germany, a polemic to stigmatize and attack Jewish academics and intellectuals, and the German Communist

¹⁰⁸ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 243.

¹⁰⁹ Germà Bel, 'Against the mainstream: Nazi privatization in 1930s Germany', *Economic History Review*, vol. 63, no. 1 (2010), pp. 34–55; and Germà Bel, 'The Coining of "Privatization" and Germany's National Socialist Party', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2006), pp. 187–194. A more recent volume is also rather enlightening, see Moritz Föllmer and Pamela E. Swett (eds.), *Reshaping Capitalism in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

¹¹⁰ Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), p. 208.

¹¹¹ Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 145.

¹¹² George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004); Gary D. Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); George L. Moss, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021) and *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021); Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

movements.¹¹³ The reason for socialist rhetoric and the name being used by Nazis was specifically a co-opting device. Angela Dienhart Hancock writes:

[...] by co-opting some of the rhetoric of the left, the Nazi party used the economic crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s to their advantage. [...] The Nazis took up the name “socialist” for themselves (though they simultaneously condemned socialists, Marxists, and communists) and constantly celebrated the virtues of the ordinary worker in their propaganda, claiming they alone could rescue the unemployed and underemployed from the economic disaster Weimar had brought upon them. Yet the “socialism” espoused by the Nazis was markedly different from that of the left. Instead of pitting classes against one another, Hitler promised the end of class warfare altogether. He offered relief from economic hardship yet shrewdly avoided all talk of the redistribution of wealth, thus placating the otherwise wary middle class. This was a “socialism” the landed right could embrace.¹¹⁴

In short, the idea that the Nazis were socialists is incorrect. They were neither free market capitalists nor socialists, though they got on best with capitalist ventures. They massively privatized, upheld class divisions, refused to redistribute wealth, did not equalize the classes, upheld aristocratic notions of governance, and conceptualized capitalistic business venture as good for their economy. And behind much of this was also church involvement. The vast majority of Nazis and their sympathizers, along with those who committed the worst atrocities of the war, were usually either Lutheran or Catholic Christians,¹¹⁵ though it should be noted this was not universal. Anderson could very well point to exceptions, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, but the reality of the situation is that most Germans, including their military, were willing participants in the Nazi regime and its plans.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); and Joan Braune, ‘Who’s Afraid of the Frankfurt School? “Cultural Marxism” as an Antisemitic Conspiracy Theory’, *Journal of Social Justice*, vol. 9 (2019).

¹¹⁴ Angela Dienhart Hancock, *Karl Barth's Emergency Homiletic, 1932-1933: A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 48.

¹¹⁵ Christopher J. Probst, ‘Protestantism in Nazi Germany: A View from the Margins’, in *Life and Times in Nazi Germany*, ed. Lisa Pine (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 214. See also, Samuel Koehne, ‘Nazi Germany as a Christian State: The “Protestant Experience” of 1933 in Württemberg’, *Central European History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2013), pp. 97–123.

¹¹⁶ David Harrisville, *The Virtuous Wehrmacht: Crafting the Myth of the German Soldier on the Eastern Front, 1941-1944* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021); and Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). According to Gellately, interviews and diary entries indicate that

As a final note, the concept of concentration camps did not arise out of Soviet gulags. Germany had already made use of concentration camps several decades before (prior to the USSR's existence) on Shark Island, where they committed a mass genocide against the Herero and Namaqua peoples of Namibia.¹¹⁷ There, they prototyped the concentration camp, loading people onto cattle cars, and then human experimentation and mass extermination. In total, around 3,000 were murdered on Shark Island, which was one of five concentration camps in Namibia under German control in the first decade of the 1900s. Baer's 2017 volume *The Genocidal Gaze* details extensively the links between this genocide and the Holocaust. One such link is Eugen Fischer, a German professor and eugenicist who performed human experimentation on the Namaqua and Herero people, and his work was read by Hitler and had an influence on Nazi legislation. While there are endless ways to rightfully criticize Nazis, Anderson's attempt to conflate them with socialists and Marxists in particular creates a distorted view of history.

Other Complaints

The volume suffers from various other defects. Anderson is not up to date on the latest medical and psychological research on transgender and LGBTQ+ people in general, and as such shows no knowledge of recent developments on these subjects, repeating a number of transphobic ideas, for instance.¹¹⁸ The volume placates particularly to American Conservative Christian sensibilities on these issues, rather than engaging the recent science. On a related note, Anderson frequently omits any reference to debates in scholarly literature, so that issues like the historical Jesus are glossed for the perpetuation of an unscrutinized traditional image of him.¹¹⁹ These same omissions occur frequently, as previously noted, especially where Christian regimes or figures may be impugned for atrocities or misdeeds. The book

Germans were aware of concentration camps and became gradually aware they meant fatality would occur if sent there.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth R. Baer, *The Genocidal Gaze: From German Southwest Africa to the Third Reich* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017) provides one of the best accounts.

¹¹⁸ Anderson, *Christianity*, pp. 284–286.

¹¹⁹ For recent volumes, see James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (eds.), *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009); Bart D. Ehrman, Craig A. Evans, and Robert B. Stewart, *Can We Trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus?* (Louisville:

Westminster John Knox Press, 2020); and Raphael Lataster, *Questioning the Historicity of Jesus: Why a Philosophical Analysis Elucidates the Historical Discourse* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

makes frequent usage of potshots and insults to degrade the character of people that Anderson dislikes.¹²⁰ Anderson also does not engage with recent critical literary or cultural theory. Feminist, Gender Queer, Neo-Marxist, Post-Marxist, Postcolonial, Critical Race theory, and more are all critically neglected in Anderson's work, which makes one wonder how he can purport to write an introductory volume on 'worldviews' and not include many of the most influential theories and worldviews of recent decades. On a technical level, the work suffers from frequent points of poor editing (e.g., I am sure that Epicureanism was not "found [sic]" by Epicurus as if it was laying around).¹²¹ As noted before, the volume lacks any comprehensive documentation, so that most of its claims go unsourced.

Conclusion

Given the above evaluation of this book, which could not even hope to touch on all of the numerous errors, caricatures, and other failures in the volume, the present reviewer cannot recommend this volume to anyone. On a purely technical level, it fails to provide an accurate or remotely up-to-date history of 'Western' worldviews, philosophies, and cultures, and as a result has failed at its primary goal. Beyond this, it actively distorts history and uses polemical and propagandistic measures in an attempt to repaint the history of the world more favourable to modern Christian sensibilities and preconceived notions, rather than present the much more nuanced and at

¹²⁰ Anderson, *Christianity*, pp. 22, 25, 32–34, 57–58, 77–79, 83, 172, 174, etc. A particularly notable one, aside from Marx, is his attacks on Michel Foucault (pp. 268–270). He attacks Foucault as being an "experimental drug user" and for his sexual exploration of sadomasochism and such. Such attempts to demolish Foucault's character are only remotely relevant on the basis of a conservative Christian moral system. More interestingly, he condemns Foucault for having sex after he contracted HIV, saying he had "very probably infected countless other people with the AIDS virus. Foucault was an awful and twisted person." Of course, by this point, however, AIDS and HIV were not widely understood, in no small part due to various governments' refusal to commit to research on these issues. In the United States, for instance, Ronald Reagan and his administration did not care, leading to years without research being done and thousands of Americans dying, see Jennifer Brier, 'Reagan and AIDS', in *A Companion to Ronald Reagan*, ed. Andrew L. Johns (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), pp. 221–237. Reagan was in office only five months when AIDS was diagnosed first, and by 1989 more than 46,000 Americans died from the disease. As Brier notes, "Ronald Reagan's first action related to AIDS was silence." By far, if Anderson wished to criticize Foucault's character, he should have pointed out that Foucault wished to lower the age of consent, rather than attacking him for being inflicted with a disease that many "Western" governments were silent toward.

¹²¹ Anderson, *Christianity*, p. 18.

times uncomfortable history that historians have long known about. It would have been far more valuable to have a volume for Christians which attempts to give them this nuanced history and help them to negotiate that darker past, rather than neglect it. This volume could have accomplished a lot by elucidating this nuanced and often disturbing history. History is complicated, but Anderson's volume removes this complication in favour of simplicity and safety, instead of giving us a view of Christian history as complex, with both good (nigh on great) and disturbing facets.

It is particularly troublesome that such a volume is being sold to laypeople (and was started with high school students in mind), as volumes such as these have the danger of continuing to misinform the public, and perpetuate myths about history and culture, reinforcing negative stereotypes, and worse. On a purely methodological level, Anderson's work functions under antiquated concepts of culture and sociological development, often treats non-Christian religious groups and people as conglomerates and fails to engage with even a small percentile of recent research on the topics that are discussed. The volume emerges more as the kind of propaganda that Anderson seeks to dispute.¹²² Instead of this, Anderson should have given us a complex history and conception of Western worldviews and of Christianity, one which could revel in giving laypeople an introduction to the complicated realities of the past.

¹²² Anderson, *Christianity*, p. iii.