


scepticism toward divine prodigies? How to sanction the impostures of the laity and clergy without scandalizing the faithful? How to discern falsehood, credulity, and superstition? Above all, how to control the circulation of stories of saints who had performed alleged miracles in the global theater of missions, in a context that favored the circulation of unverifiable news such as those reported in the gazettes but also in the *litterae annuae* printed by the Jesuits? The stories of the biographers of the missionary “martyr” Marcello Mastrilli and the prophet Giulio Mancinelli (who forced the rules imposed by Urban VIII concerning the writing of the lives of non-canonized saints, thus prompting the Roman Congregations to reformulate them) are emblematic of the contradictions that ran through the Church’s leadership—this, in an era of uncertainty in which the demand for evidence and the myriad taste for invention coexisted. All the more so because, for Tutino, a critic (like Brad Gregory) of the old paradigm of secularization and the Enlightenment vulgate, the travails that the institutions of Rome went through in the seventeenth century show that the black legend that relegated the Church to the margins of modernity, interpreting it as a monolith deaf to all doubts, must be abandoned, as the more recent historiography on Early Modern Catholicism, with which she engages in lively dialogue, strives to do.

Perhaps the text could have delved into the concept of *fides* along with that of *credulitas* with which it ended up being confused; and perhaps some of the cases reported are less significant than others in demonstrating the book’s thesis. But it is an intriguing, well-written, and solid piece of research, useful even to those who would hesitate to share an overly benevolent judgement on the disciplinary and repressive institutions of the Tridentine Church.

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***William Whiston and the Apostolic Constitutions: Completing the Reformation.* By Paul R. Gilliam III. Studia Patristica Supplements 11. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2023. x + 185 pp. €68.00 paper.**

Paul Gilliam’s study offers a glimpse into William Whiston’s intellectual importance as an eighteenth-century scholar of early Christian history as well as Whiston’s understanding of himself within the flow of ecclesial reform. Gilliam explores Whiston’s view of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the evidence that Whiston employed to come to his conclusions, and the controversy that Whiston sparked concerning both the *Apostolic Constitutions* and his understanding of the Trinity. The work traces a development that occurred in the second half of Whiston’s life, in which he came to believe that the *Apostolic Constitutions* were a first-century composition that arose from a series of councils in which the apostles formalized what they had received from Jesus during the forty days between his resurrection and the ascension described in Acts 1. Whiston’s position can be contrasted with the dominant position today, which understands them as a compilation of earlier sources that were edited into their current form during the second half of the fourth century. Gilliam sheds light on how a respectable Cambridge

professor of mathematics and ordained clergyman within the Church of England came to a position that placed him in the extreme minority of his learned peers.

After locating his study in relation to Maurice Wiles's *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), Gilliam announces that his purpose is "to tell a story—an intriguing story" regarding how the *Apostolic Constitutions* became the centerpiece of both William Whiston's intellectual career and his daily life (1). Accordingly, Gilliam composes his book in the form of a story that follows Whiston through his discovery of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, traces his understanding of the work, considers the evidence with which he supported his view, and narrates the reception of his work by his contemporaries. These four moves provide the skeleton on which the four main chapters of the work are constructed. Whiston's personal discovery of the *Apostolic Constitutions* began as he was increasingly convinced by Isaac Newton and Samuel Clarke that the Nicene understanding of the Trinity was not taught by the apostles. While rereading the New Testament, Christian literature through the end of the second century, and Novatian's *Treatise on the Trinity*, Whiston encountered the *Apostolic Constitutions* as the final nail in what he perceived to be the Nicene coffin. Whiston understood the *Apostolic Constitutions* as a record of five apostolic councils that took place between 48 and 86 CE to clarify what Jesus taught the apostles during the forty days after his resurrection. Gilliam examines Whiston's defense of the early dating of the *Apostolic Constitutions* with an eye to both internal and external evidence. Whiston's evidence from within the *Apostolic Constitutions* consists in large part of canonical discussions—both where the *Apostolic Constitutions* should be placed in relation to the New Testament canon as well as the citations of New Testament documents within the *Apostolic Constitutions*. His discussion of external evidence focuses on references to the *Apostolic Constitutions* in other early Christian documents. Gilliam traces these citations with Whiston from the Therapeutae and Ignatius of Antioch to the Council of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom. Gilliam then traces Whiston's reception and ongoing discussions with others in the intelligentsia, including Anthony Collins, Benjamin Hoadley, and Richard Ibbetson.

As Gilliam concludes the volume, he evaluates Whiston's argument with reference to a boxing analogy. Whiston loses the match between himself and his opponents regarding the origins of the *Apostolic Constitutions*. However, Gilliam sees the loss not as a knockout but as a match that came down to a judge's decision based on points. Yet, although Whiston's understanding of the *Apostolic Constitutions* may be unique, his struggles with the Athanasian creed and Nicene articulations of the Trinity are far from *sui generis* in the context of eighteenth-century Britain. Moreover, Gilliam suggests that Whiston's greatest legacy to later thinkers is likely to be his belief in religious liberty and intellectual honesty, something that one of Whiston's opponents, Anthony Collins, likewise upheld when disputing Whiston.

The greatest service that Gilliam has provided is to offer a fascinating, carefully narrated account of how and why Whiston argued for the authenticity of the *Apostolic Constitutions*. This story is well grounded in primary sources and especially in citations from the works of Whiston himself. For example, the story begins by noting Whiston's concern about the defects of the Protestant Reformation in his "Advice for the Study of Divinity." When it comes to Whiston's evidence for the early origins of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Gilliam quotes liberally from Whiston's *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd* and cites from the many early Christian texts that Whiston mentions therein. Gilliam's knowledge of the eighteenth-century sources is most clearly on display

when he describes the reception of Whiston's work as he cites from both the variety of responses to Whiston as well as Whiston's companion letters, essays, and books. Nor does Gilliam attempt solely to play the role of an impartial arbiter—if such exists. Although Gilliam presents Whiston in a sympathetic light, he is not afraid to show Whiston's questionable use of evidence in his arguments for the authenticity of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

Such detailed work makes this book a model of attentive historical scholarship. It provides insight into a figure who desired to push the Reformation in more radical directions than many in eighteenth-century Britain and who arguably remains understudied in the context of modern European church history. The book's narrow focus on Whiston is complemented by its wide-ranging examination of materials from the first four centuries of Christian history. Gilliam has thus provided a study that will challenge and enlighten historians who are interested in the earliest periods of church history, who study the Reformation and its aftermath, and especially those who are interested in British ecclesial disputes in the aftermath of the Civil War and Restoration.

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***Records of Trial from Thomas Shepard's Church in Cambridge, 1638–1649: Heroic Souls.* By Lori Rogers-Stokes. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. xxi + 190 pp. \$54.99 hardcover.**

Most seventeenth-century Massachusetts churches required that prospective members tell the church convincingly of the working of God's grace in them. Few of these conversion narratives have survived, and the sixty-seven from the Cambridge church during Thomas Shepard's pastorate (1636–1648) comprise over half. *Records of Trials* is an adventurous revisionist exploration of those Cambridge narratives.

In chapter 1, Rogers-Stokes rejects the general scholarly assumption that these narratives, preserved in two of Shepard's manuscripts, are the ones that candidates delivered for admission. Rather, they come from preparatory sessions for that delivery, a standard Massachusetts practice. Shepard's title in his earlier manuscript "The Confessions of Diverse propounded to be received and were entertained as members" confirms this origin, Rogers-Stokes claims, for a title referring to final confessions would have identified the confessors as members at its very beginning (9–10). Rogers-Stokes might have explained more fully why that had to be so. Her second argument is based on the narratives' under-rehearsed nature, their hesitations, memory lapses, and long pauses, all tending to increase markedly toward the end of a narrative. These characteristics, she claims (11–12), perhaps correctly, would have been out of place in a final confession.

Rogers-Stokes's third and, on the face of it, decisive argument for these being preliminary narratives is that many of them would have been unacceptable as final confessions. Shepard required assurance of salvation for admission, she claims, and since all the confessors were admitted despite only a minority of these narratives demonstrating