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Rome, Italy

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Professor Jude Dougherty whom we honor by this special collection of essays has devoted his entire career as dean of the faculty of philosophy at the Catholic University of America and as the author of many publications to the study of Western culture, religion and science, and has shown a great affinity with the thought of the illustrious English historian and philosopher Christopher Dawson. As Dawson had done before him, Dougherty in all his works stresses the overruling importance of the classical, humanistic education and the central place and role of religion in our Western culture. One of his latest books, *The Logic of Religion*, presents an examination of the role of religion from a historical and philosophical point of view¹. Well known are also his *Western Creed*, *Western Identity* and *The Nature of Scientific Explanation*,² in which he shows the value of Aristotle's understanding of nature and, at the same time, his own capacity of presenting a masterful overview of complex philosophical issues. Characteristic of Jude Dougherty is the wide range of his reading, something we admire also in Christopher Dawson: a huge historical knowledge and an amazing acquaintance with all relevant literature. As Dawson was for many years the editor of the *Dublin Review*, Jude Dougherty has for more than thirty years directed *The Review of Metaphysics*.

Christopher Dawson was born in 1889 in Wales, and educated at Trinity College, Oxford, and was lecturer in the history of culture at Uni-

¹ See Jude P. Dougherty, *The Logic of Religion* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

² See Jude P. Dougherty's two books: *Western Creed: Western Identity: Essays in Legal and Social Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), and *The Nature of Scientific Explanation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

versity College, Exeter. In his numerous books he studies the factors which determine the character of the great cultures and analyzes their different components. In order to do so, it is not enough, he said, to apply categories of the philosophy of history but we must also use the laborious work of social anthropologists.³ In his deepdelving studies of the great world cultures Dawson himself has done so and provides a wealth of information which provokes the admiration of his readers. He passed away in 1970.

In his first book *The Age of the Gods* (1928), Dawson describes the material and spiritual life of man from the oldest civilizations up to the beginning of the Greek organization of city living and its developing education. The book has been called the best short account of the life of prehistoric man. Dawson himself sees the book as an attempt not to present a series of isolated facts, but to describe the ancient cultures as living realities and as the result of many interacting spiritual and material impulses.

Dawson's perhaps best known book is his *The Making of Europe* (1932), where we read that it is one of the great merits of the study of the history of religion and science that it takes us beyond the present moment, helps us to overcome parochialism and to discover realities otherwise unknown to us. From the very beginning of the book he declares that it is from the Greeks that we derive all that is most distinctive in Western as opposed to Oriental culture. This spiritual heritage came to us through the Romans: after Caesar and Augustus Central and Western Europe were subjected to a process of progressive romanization for 400 years. As the poet Prudentius said, the Roman peace has prepared the road for the coming of Christ. It was to Rome that the new peoples owed the very idea of a common civilization.⁴ In this great book which made Dawson famous, are successively described the foundations of what was to become Europe: the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church, the classical tradition and the "barbarians" who invaded the Empire and, at last, its downfall. The author next examines the influence of Byzantium and the expansion of Moslem culture to turn in Part III to the conversion of the barbarians and the carolingian renaissance, the rise of mediaeval unity. Dawson sees the eleventh century as a turning point in European history: the Dark Ages come to an end and Western culture emerges. He points out that the merits of the study

³ Cf. Christopher Dawson, "Arnold Toynbee and the Study of History", *International Affairs* CXXXI (1955): 402.

⁴ See Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe. An Introduction to the History of European Union* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 20.

of the history of culture and religion is that it takes us out of ourselves and makes us discover realities otherwise unknown to us and helps us to become aware of our heritage. The Catholic Church had a pervasive influence on European unity; before being subjects of a duke, count or king, people were Christians, and the Church promoted the same ethical categories of thought and introduced through the use of Latin a common way of thinking; for almost 2000 years young people were educated in the classics, read the same books and learned the same standards of conduct.

What made Christopher Dawson even better known all through the English speaking world were his Gifford Lectures of 1947 and 1948.

The first series of 10 lectures had as its title *Religion and Culture*. Natural theology and the elements of religion—God, the supernatural—and their relation to culture are discussed. Dawson admits that among professional historians there still is some distrust of the term *culture* as not having a very precise meaning. He himself considers culture as the building of a common way of life by a community of people, in consideration of its physical environment and economic needs.

A basic point of departure is the observation that the Divine encloses the whole of nature. The rest of what makes up the religions has been added later, often in a mythical form. It appears that religions have a creative role with regard to culture. Not to speak only of the role of Christianity in the making of Europe Dawson points to the influence of Buddhism on Tibet and on the Mongols; that most aggressive warrior people of Asia gradually changed their habits under the influence of a religion of non-aggression, which appears to have contributed to the cessation of the age-old drive of the peoples of the steppes to East and West. On the other hand, the native way of life and the religion of the peoples of the steppes influenced on their turn Buddhism and their gods became members of the Buddhist pantheon.

After dealing with the sources of religious knowledge and the religious organs of society, prophets, priesthood and sacrifice, Dawson describes how the king has always been distinguished from the tyrant or magistrate by the possession of a sort of divine mandate. In a next lecture we hear about sacred science and initiation in the knowledge of the tribe or the people. Every culture develops its own techniques for coordinating the life of the society with the order of nature. With the observation of the solstices and the development of a solar calendar there was an increasing awareness of the order of nature. The more people observed the stars, the more they became impressed with a celestial order. Dawson reminds us that astral

theology acquired immense prestige and quotes a text from Book XII, ch. 8 of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*:

Our forefathers in the most remote ages have handed down to us, their posterity, a tradition in the form of a myth, that these substances are gods and that the divine encloses the whole of nature . . . Later they saw these gods in the form of men or like some of the other animals . . . but that they thought these first substances to be gods, we must regard this as an inspired utterance.⁵

In fact the conviction or feeling prevailed that the sea and the land are full of the divine. The sun and the moon give signs to us that it is time to wake up and to do our work and to rest; the seasons of the year tell us the time for sowing and harvesting. Behind these natural powers at work there is a common ruling principle and man's kinship with this divine principle was acknowledged and celebrated.

In his next lecture, chapter 8, of *Religion and Culture* Dawson reflects on the importance of law in the history of culture, law as hallowed custom and as divine decree. China has preserved the ideal of a sacred order, which remained a living force for the Chinese people down to our time. But one wonders what will happen now that the country opened the gates first to the Marxist ideology and subsequently to the invasion of modern technological culture.

In chapter 9 we read that in almost all civilizations religion and intellectual culture have been practically inseparable. There has been a general quest for enlightenment. If prayer is natural to man, we should not reject the efforts of introversion by which the soul seeks the way to a transcendent absolute reality. In this connection Dawson quotes a text from St. Thomas: "True happiness does not consist in physical or social goods or in moral virtues. The final good of man is to be found in the contemplation of God and it is to this act that all human activities seem to be directed as their last end."⁶ The final lines of the chapter are worth quoting:

Religion is like a bridge between two worlds by means of which the order of culture is brought into conscious relation with the transcendent reality of spiritual being. But in religions of negation and pure contemplation the bridge is open in only one direction. It is a way of

⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, 8, 1074b1–10, trans. W. D. Ross.

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, III, 37.

escape from the city into the wilderness and the spirit that goes out does not return again. Thus the world of culture is gradually weakened and finally deserted, like the great Buddhist cities of ancient Ceylon where the jungle has returned and swallowed up palaces and monasteries and irrigation tanks, leaving only the figure of Buddha, contemplating the vanity of action and the cessation of existence.⁷

In the last chapter of his book Dawson turns to religion and cultural change. After listing examples of this influence of religious beliefs on man's life, he draws attention to the flowering of Western culture and institutions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries under the influence of religious factors: the creation of Gothic architecture, the intellectual synthesis of Christian Aristotelianism, the birth of the medieval cities and the rise of universities, the development of new orders such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans. However, it was not a lasting achievement: the Reformation period destroyed the cultural unity of the medieval world. What happened in Europe shows that religion is not only a unifying force, but that it can also become disruptive. Movements arose which as such were disruptive and other-worldly but which were at the same time a factor of economic enterprise. A religious movement, however, which adopts a negative attitude to culture becomes a force of destruction.

Dawson lists the conditions which make a fruitful cooperation between religion and culture possible: the assertion of the absolute transcendent spiritual claims of religion must not be interpreted as a denial of the circumscribed, historically conditioned and temporal values of culture. In the second place these limited, historically conditioned values of particular cultures must not be regarded as possessing universal religious validity. The great world religions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam actually created spiritual unities which transcended the limits of a particular culture. In our own age the development of cultural and scientific life is introducing a new common way of life. At this point of his lecture Dawson quotes Cardinal Newman:

Considering, then, the characteristics of this great civilized Society [of our Western culture] . . . I think it has a claim to be considered as the representative Society and Civilization of the human race, as its perfect result and limit, in fact, those portions of the race which do

⁷ Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 149.

not coalesce with it being left to stand by themselves as anomalies, unaccountable indeed, but for that very reason not interfering with what on the contrary has been turned to account and has grown into a whole. I call then this commonwealth pre-eminently and emphatically Human Society, and its intellect the Human Mind, and its decisions the sense of mankind, and its disciplined and cultivated state Civilization in the abstract, and the territory on which it lies the *orbis terrarum*, or the World.⁸

Although over the past century and half many things have changed, the process of social and economic unification still continues. The emphasis is today on Western techniques. But this modern scientific culture is devoid of all positive spiritual content. It is a body without a soul while religion is becoming a spirit without a body. Man has achieved control over his material environment by science and technology, but this control has coincided with the abandonment of the principle of spiritual order. Man's powers have been made the servants of economic acquisitiveness. Dawson, however, hopes that this total secularization presents only one aspect of our modern cultural life and that there will be a return to unity.

Christopher Dawson also delivered his second series of the Gifford Lectures (1948–1949) in the University of Edinburgh, in which he took up several themes dealt with or touched upon in his *The Making of Europe*, such as “The Church and the Barbarians,” the medieval city, the guilds, schools and universities, but the first chapter is new: “The Significance of Western Development.”⁹ The study of the great world religions is difficult: often we cannot trace them to their source, although the history of Christianity is an exception: we know exactly where it arose, we have the letters of the founders of the different churches and we can trace the stages of their development. But in his *Understanding Europe* (1952) Dawson complains that nowadays the interaction of religion and culture in the life of Western society has been almost forgotten. First, new ideologies arose—national socialism and fascism, on the one hand, and communism, on the other. Subsequently, after the downfall of these forces which terrorized many nations for several decades, the picture has changed: after the spreading of a certain prosperity, the irruption into people's life of technical gadgets, on the one hand, and the fading of distances between cities and

⁸ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (London: Forgotten Books, 2013), 253–254.

⁹ Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (London: Sheed & Ward: 1950).

countries as well as the easy accessibility by modern means of transportation of other continents, on the other, we witness a loss of depth, of common purpose. A separation has occurred between religion and culture. Over a thousand years a dynamic force has been at work, *scilicet* Christian religion which gave people a direction and the consciousness of personal responsibility. In those past ages Europe was not a political creation, but a community of peoples who shared the same faith, had a common spiritual tradition that had its origin three thousand years ago in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰ When the Greeks became aware of their separation from the Asian world, when they realized that they possessed a different way of life and a different standard of values, as free and self governing men, Europe was born. As Dawson had explained in his *The Making of Europe*, Christianity became the spiritual force, inspiration and moral ideal of the Greek-Roman civilization. Christianity gave a new spiritual purpose, initiated the discovery of the transcendent Principle and taught a new morality. But now that the influence of the Christian religion has become much weaker, Dawson is looking for a dynamic purpose which should animate the European peoples and lead to the birth of new spiritual forces. For no culture can survive by its technique alone. By the restoration of the triple relation between spiritual ends, moral values and social action, Europa can overcome its present cultural crisis, which is due above all to the growth of technical power and the loss of spirituality.¹¹ “It is only as parts of a larger whole that the states of Western Europe can survive, whether they are great or small. Europe is a society of peoples and can only survive as such.”¹²

In order to explain what Europe has become, Dawson sketches the development taking place in the nineteenth century when Prussia was instrumental in reducing the power and influence of Austria. But the different national states lost their awareness of being a Christian commonwealth. However, in order to survive the European nations must form a super-national community and find a delicate balance between the centrifugal force of nationality and the common spiritual traditions. In chapter V we find a fine survey of the cultural and political forces which during the past 500 years shaped czarist and communist Russia. As a rival communist country China has become a most influential factor in the balance of power. In the next two chapters Dawson argues that in Asia the education

¹⁰ Christopher Dawson, *Understanding Europe* (London: Sheed & Ward: 1952), 26.

¹¹ *Id.*, 223.

¹² *Id.*, 55.

and thought have been formed and conditioned by the rites, customs and ceremonial forms, the Chinese classics, the Vedanta and the Koran.

The question arises to what extent the present technological revolution and its side-effects shape and influence the minds of people.¹³ Dawson describes the relationship and cultural differences between Europe and Asia and turns to consider Europe overseas and the New World of the United States of America. "America is essential to the existence of Europe, but it is also an essential part of Western civilization."¹⁴ For the European immigrants America meant great freedom and liberation from the economic and political servitudes of the Old World. The conquest of the Western part of the United States and the influx of immigrants from Italy, Germany and Poland caused important cultural changes. The newcomers generally separated themselves from their countries of origin, but risked to lose their original spiritual orientation in their restless quest for wealth and comfort. At this point of his text Dawson quotes from De Tocqueville who sees "An innumerable multitude of men, all equal and alike, incessantly endeavouring to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives; . . . above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratification."¹⁵ This power spares them the trouble of thinking and facilitates the acquisition of means to procure pleasure. An age of unparalleled economic expansion and material prosperity has been accompanied by the neglect and loss of the spiritual resources on which the inner strength of a civilization depends. Wealth loses its relation to labour¹⁶. He quotes Charles Peguy who writes: "There has never been an age in which money was to such a degree the only master and god. And never have the rich been so protected against the poor . . . and never has the temporal been so protected against the spiritual; and never has the spiritual been so unprotected against the temporal."¹⁷

In the following chapters Dawson shows that Europe has lost its position of leadership.

¹³ Id., 128.

¹⁴ Id., 159.

¹⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, part 3, ch. 6, in Richard C. Box, *Public Administration and Society: Critical Issues in American Governance* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2014), 88.

¹⁶ Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, 180-182.

¹⁷ Charles Péguy, *L'argent suite*, 170-171, quoted in Christopher Dawson, *Christianity and the New Age* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931), 3.

There arose a movement which denied the eternal truths of Christianity. He sees a succession of attitudes of the people which brought about far-reaching cultural changes: first cultural nationalism, then social revolution and finally the denial and rejection of higher cultural values.¹⁸ Industrialization detached the societies most completely from their cultural roots. It demonstrates that no culture can live by technique alone, but it is by the restoration of the triple reaction between spiritual ends, moral values and social action that Europe can overcome its present cultural crisis, which is due above all to the growth of technical power, the loss of spiritual aims and, one might add, the sweet attractiveness of comfort and limitless entertainment. The real evil is the breach that has taken place between the technical development of our civilization and its spiritual life.¹⁹ There has never been a society so totally absorbed in the technique or more forgetful of the ultimate spiritual values for the sake of which the human race exists. Dawson illustrates what he is saying by comparing the construction of a medieval cathedral like that of Chartres or Amiens with the building of a modern skyscraper. The first is an expression of spiritual values and evokes the spiritual history of mankind, referring at the same time to man's final destination, the modern high rise building is just an expression of technical prowess and may even lack the harmonious fitting in with its environment which is an element of beauty.²⁰ While in the past both the British and American ways of life were influenced and guided by the Bible, there is now a spiritual void. The war in business affairs and profits absorbs most energies. In the past Christian education was also an initiation into another world. Today there is no place for a divine revelation. "Modern civilization today seems to be following the same road as the ancient world under the Roman Empire: on the one hand, a vast development of natural resources and luxury—above all luxury for the masses, bread and games and baths and theaters; on the other hand, the presence of unlimited power in the hands of the masters of the world."²¹ Nevertheless, Dawson sees in Christian humanism a force which can reshape Western culture.

In his *Christianity and the New Age* Dawson argues that attempts to eliminate Christianity or restrict its social influence cut the roots of human-

¹⁸ Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, 213.

¹⁹ *Id.*, 231.

²⁰ *Id.*, 232.

²¹ *Id.*, 251.

ism's own source. He points to the affinity between Christianity and science. For the Catholic researcher and scientist the scientific organization of the world and the study of the powers hidden in matter are to be examined and their progressive rationalization is the natural vocation of the human mind. "It is not at all a matter of chance that science has come to its full fruition in a culture whose basic values have been formed by Christianity."²² Dawson also stresses the central place of Christian humanism, which finds its roots in natural law, that is, in the order of creation, and when humanism is stripped of its basic source in Christian religion, it may grow wild, turn into corruption and indifference. A further characteristic stressed by the author is the searching of the transcendental and the presence of messianic elements which give it a dynamic character. In this line he draws attention to the conversion of the nations, the promotion of education, the building of schools and hospitals.

A particularity in the thought of the 19th and 20th centuries is the prominent place of some Jews in introducing new elements: Marx, Freud, Einstein. Dawson suggests an explanation: the Jews while sharing in our civilization, have nevertheless their own way of life, as if they can observe the world from the outside.

There is an absolute and metaphysical foundation for religion. In all religions there is an aspiration to become the savior which rescues the people. Somewhat further on in this book the author points out that in the Western world religion has come to be considered as one among a number of competing interests. The Protestant Reformation contributed to this insofar as it tended to eliminate the metaphysical element in the Christian tradition, abolished asceticism and monasticism and subordinated contemplation to action, intelligence to will.²³ The general conviction tried to impose itself that this world is all important and is all that one has—a feeling which is antagonistic against the nature and role of Christianity.

Somewhat later on in this book Dawson comes to speak of the Christian doctrine of Christ as uniting in his divine person both human nature and his divine nature. This union of created reality with divinity is a stumbling block between the Oriental mind and the Christianity.²⁴ Christianity which is now threatened by the materialism and mechanism of our

²² Dawson, *Christianity and the New Age*, 94 ff.

²³ Id., 61.

²⁴ Id., 82.

modern civilization, has been the main source of the spiritual achievement of the European civilization.

But “at the very moment that man was at last acquiring control over his material environment,” he was abandoning the ideal of a spiritual order and leaving the new economic forces to develop uncontrolled, without any higher social direction. Economic activity was no longer regarded as a function of society as a whole but as an independent world in which the only laws were purely economic.²⁵ The scientific accomplishments we have reached “are providing us with countless unnecessary objects and endowing mankind with new means of self destruction.” Dawson, then, concludes by saying that we must make our choice between the ideal of a spiritual order animated by charity and a material organization of the world which absorbs our whole life.²⁶

In his *The Movement of World Revolution* (1959), published as one of his last books, Dawson draws attention to the spread of Western ideologies and the Western way of life, something which exercises its influence on the other cultures. The world has to a certain extent been unified by European trade and colonization, and more recently by science, education and the media. The people of Asia have been forced into a new cosmopolitan society which is predominantly Western in its principles and its values. In a sense communism in China is also a gigantic undertaking of Westernization, directly by certain of its ideas and its organization, indirectly by the yearning of individual freedom and spiritual values it provokes.

In the past religion has been the greatest of the powers that formed the mind and developed the culture of the Asiatic peoples. At the present moment it is in eclipse owing to the wave of secular influences that has accompanied the spread of Western culture. But it is too soon to say how far this eclipse will go . . . Neither the technological progress that is forcing East and West together nor the insurgence of nationalist forces that is tearing them apart can save the modern world . . . Salvation can only come from some power capable of creating a spiritual unity which will transcend and compre-

²⁵ Id., 93–95.

²⁶ Id., 102.

hend the material unity of the new world order. And where can this power be found save in religion?²⁷

A last question which arises in connection with our theme is whether the Second Vatican Council in its *Constitution on the Church in the World Today* professed a view of the contemporary cultural situation close to that of Christopher Dawson as we have analyzed it in this essay. Although many experts at the council were optimistic and welcomed recent developments in our civilization, several Fathers spoke of a pervasive spirit of atheism spreading through our Western societies. Shortly after the closure of the council Pope Paul VI called the rupture between the Gospel and contemporary culture the drama of our time.²⁸ One may think here of the spreading of contraception, the decline of the population in Western countries, the weakening of the traditional family, the loss of direct contact with man's natural environment so that his access to the Creator is obscured; technical products do not possess a direct reference to God, but, as St. Paul says, from this visible world, the creation of God, that we must come to know the invisible God. The natural order is corroded by anthropocentrism and the spreading conviction that man can remold natural structures, as some try to do in the gender theory. Christopher Dawson predicted that modern Western man might be devoured by all his technical inventions, to the point of losing his soul. The Constitution avoids to mention these dangers but speaks of the harmony between the Christian faith and the natural order, substituting for culture the term natural order.

Among the theologians who took a lively interest in the proceedings at the Council some voices advocated that the Church abandon the vestment of classical culture; they demanded a de-hellenization of the expression of the formulae of the faith, but in the text of the Pastoral Constitution the council Fathers, while admitting that the great cultures of the world may enrich our Christian life, declared that it is inconceivable that the Church abandons what it has made its own by its inculturation in the Greco-Roman world.²⁹ Behind this declaration obviously stands the firm

²⁷ Christopher Dawson, *The Movement of World Revolution* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1959), 76–77.

²⁸ *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, December 1975), 20.

²⁹ *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 7 December 1965), 72.

conviction that human reason must collaborate in the formulation of the creed and the moral law.

The Pastoral Constitution, however, notices that in our modern world positivism dominates and that what is not strictly empirical is rejected. Modern life underwent sweeping changes in its cultural and social aspects.³⁰ Certain elements of the Christian Western culture spread through the world, so that a certain planetary culture is emerging. But the text warns that culture must remain subordinated to the good of the human person.

In his far reaching study *The Logic of Religion* which we mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Professor Jude Dougherty examines the positions of Greek and Roman authors, of Christians, Aquinas and the Reformers, as well as those of some later influential philosophers and oriental religious systems. In the final part of his noteworthy and stimulating exposé he deals with the unity of religious experience, returning in a way to Christopher Dawson's *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*. To illustrate this narrow relationship I quote the following sentences: "Western civilization is so bound up with Christianity that it is difficult to separate the two."³¹ Together with Dawson and Pope Benedict Dougherty calls attention to the great role of the Benedictine monasteries in the development of Western culture. Dougherty also mentions the enormous cultural impoverishment in the area where radical communist ideology has been imposed. "The type of philosophy one espouses implicitly or explicitly either opens one to faith or closes faith as an intellectual option."³²

Christopher Dawson's most important analysis of our Western civilization and his demonstration of the central role of Christianity continues to bear fruit and lives on in the important studies of such philosophers as Jude Dougherty.

³⁰ Id., 54.

³¹ Dougherty, *The Logic of Religion*, 164.

³² Id., 166.

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON**SUMMARY**

Inspired with Jude P. Dougherty's works in which he stresses the overruling importance of the classical, humanistic education and the central place and role of religion in the Western culture, the author presents Christopher Dawson's analysis of the Western civilization and his demonstration of the central role of Christianity in it. The author traces the premises on which was based Dawson's opinion that modern Western man might be absorbed by his technical inventions, to the point of losing his soul.

KEYWORDS: Dougherty, Dawson, Western civilization, religion, Christianity.