

Hello NARWers,

Thank you so much for reading the introduction and appendix/methodology section of my manuscript. Some background: I am transitioning my work from a dissertation into a book for Fordham University Press. The revised manuscript is due to the press January 31, 2019 (a timeline of events is attached).

My reviewers main concern was that the introduction was too dissertation-y (not a surprise as it was a dissertation). So I have done my best to simplify the introduction, remove extraneous footnotes, and refocus sections. I have amped up (slightly) the Catholic component and toned down the humor & religion angle. I have reorganized the entire introduction and separated out the methodology section to an appendix.

My questions for you: how is the new intro? Where can I punch it up and where is it confusing? I also have no idea how to start a book. What should the introductory sentences look like? Should I start with a story? What story? Should I begin with an introduction to Colbert himself or dive into my argument? Should I use another distinction between actor and character other than Colbert and COLBERT?

More logistical questions: will the book suffer if I don't have many photos? How should I go about obtaining rights to images I've screenshot? What should the cover be? I'm considering commissioning a friend to create a stained glass image of Colbert with ashes on his forehead in front of *The Colbert Report* stained glass. What covers have been evocative for you? Do you know other people I should be consulting about this?

Thank you for your advice and guidance as I revise this manuscript. My membership in NARW has been a highlight of my time at Northwestern and I'm honored to be able to continue to be a part of this group. Your collegiality and generosity are appreciated!

Best,

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Chapter Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Chapter two examines how COLBERT compares to his lineage of Catholic figures who present their views of Catholicism to Americans through radio, film, and television. While previous eras had media figures such as Father Charles Coughlin and Bishop Fulton Sheen who were official clergy members, Colbert marks a significant shift because he is not a priest, does not portray a clergy member on *The Colbert Report*, and utilizes over-exaggerated humorous segments to address issues of Catholic authority for twenty-first-century audiences. *The Colbert Report's* famous religion segment, "Yahweh or No Way" serves as a lens through which to examine lay religious authority as COLBERT judges contemporary culture on God's behalf.
3. In chapter three, I explore Colbert's role as a catechist. Colbert presents himself as a Catholic on- and off-screen with humor that combines catechetical knowledge and satirical comedy. Stephen Colbert is a contemporary paradox in mass media: a comedian who can truly mock and identify with his religion simultaneously. His relationships and interviews with contemporary Catholic authorities demonstrate how he reifies and critiques the institutional Catholic Church.
4. Chapter four examines Colbert as part of a distinct group of Catholic comedians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many of whom mine their Catholicism for humorous material. A defining characteristic of Catholic humor are the comedians' relationships with the institutional Catholic Church and their own Catholic identity. Colbert is distinct from his contemporaneous comedians because he continually asserts that he is a "practicing" Catholic, and his mild critiques do not disturb America's institutional Catholic Church.
5. The fifth chapter asks about the broader implications of this television show. What does COLBERT and Colbert's religious humor reveal about the conflicts and tensions in contemporary American Catholic life? American Catholicism is not a unified entity, and the multiplicity of the Colbert(s) reflects the multiplicity and diversity in American Catholic identities. Here, I put Colbert's theological musings in context with his comedy to define "Colbert Catholicism," a type of Catholicism that sees humor as beneficial to ones' faith. Colbert Catholicism also uses humor and satire to grapple with twenty-first century conflicts in the Catholic Church, specifically the priest sex abuse scandals.
6. Chapter six contends with Colbert, COLBERT, and the extreme polarization of the twenty-first-century's Culture Wars. Colbert's character is a right-wing political media star who plays up the divide of liberal and conservative for comedic effect, as evidenced by the 2010 Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear, co-hosted with Jon Stewart.
7. Chapter seven looks beyond *The Colbert Report*, to Colbert's move to CBS's *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* in 2015. The character COLBERT left the air in 2014, but "truthiness" has never been more relevant, especially evident in the 2016 election where false claims and "fake news" drew COLBERT back into the spotlight. This epilogue ponders Colbert's role in the 2016 election and the position of "America's Most Famous Catholic" in a post-*The Colbert Report* world.

Dissertation to Manuscript as of 9.22.18:

- December 2016: (dissertation not complete) sent initial book proposal to Eerdman's Series of Religious Biography
- August 2017: (dissertation complete) and met with Editor David Bratt who asked for a more focused revision of book proposal (wasn't sure I was interested in the press).
- September/October 2017: emailed revised book proposal to:
  - Eerdman's – David Bratt for Heath Carter's Library of Religious Biography series
  - Fordham University Press – Fred Nachbaur and John Seitz Catholic Practice in North America series
  - NYU Press – Jennifer Hammer
  - University of Kansas Press – Kim Hogeland for CultureAmerica series
- November 2017: AAR
  - Met with Eerdman's, Fordham, and NYU and gave all of them the book proposal and one chapter
  - Eerdman's wanted it to be more religiously-focused than I was prepared for.
  - NYU and UKansas Press wanted more chapters and total re-write of dissertation.
  - Fordham asked for the whole manuscript to send to reviewers immediately.
- December 2017-March 2018: Revised manuscript and sent to Fordham
- March-June 2018: Fordham sent to two reviewers
- June 2018: Received comments from reviewers and series editor
- July 2018: Press editorial board decided to publish
- August 2018: Signed contract
- January 31, 2019: Manuscript, photo reproduction rights, and cover art ideas due to Fordham University Press

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION – PRESENTING STEPHEN COLBERT

Since its debut in 2005, *The Colbert Report* cast COLBERT as a devout, vocal, and authoritative Catholic. Colbert’s exaggeration of COLBERT’s position and power led COLBERT to proclaim that he was “television’s foremost Catholic.”<sup>i</sup> His religion was so central to the show that religion blogs dubbed him “Colbert the Catechist.” The Jesuit *America* magazine even went as far as to recommend Catholic educators take notes on his entertaining and persuasive evangelizing style.<sup>ii</sup> As *The Colbert Report* ended its series run in late 2014, *The National Catholic Reporter* named Stephen Colbert their “Runner-up to Person of the Year,” second only to Pope Francis. For the editors and readers of the progressive *Reporter*, Stephen Colbert represents a powerful mouthpiece for their political, social, and religious perspectives.

*“America’s Most Famous Catholic” (According to Himself)* investigates the ways in which Colbert challenges Catholic *mores* through his comedy. Through his television program and digital media presence, Colbert is a twenty-first century celebrity pundit who inhabits a realm of extreme political and social polarization. I examine how Catholicism shapes Colbert’s life and world, and also how he and his persona influence Catholicism and American Catholic thought and practice. In addition, I analyze how Colbert and his character COLBERT nuance the polarized religious landscape, making space for Americans who currently define their religious lives through absence, ambivalence, and alternatives. COLBERT and Colbert reflect the complexity of contemporary American Catholicism as it is lived, both on- and off-screens.

This book is a digital media ethnography and rhetorical analysis of Stephen Colbert and his character STEPHEN COLBERT from 2005-2014. In the satirical tradition of Jonathan Swift and Mark Twain, COLBERT informed audiences on current events, politics, social issues, and

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religion, while lampooning conservative political policy, biblical literalism, and religious hypocrisy. In this era of “fake news,” I investigate the religious identity and authority of a figure whose trademark “truthiness” encouraged the religious and political polarization that marks twenty-first-century America.

Born in 1964, Stephen Colbert grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, the youngest of eleven children in a devout Catholic family. In a *CBS Sunday Morning* interview with comedian and journalist Mo Rocca in 2015, Stephen Colbert described his family as a “humor-ocracy.”<sup>iii</sup> Everyone was funny and the way to have a voice was through your comedy. His father and two brothers closest to him in age died in a plane crash in 1974 when Stephen was 10 years old.<sup>iv</sup> He pinpoints that as a turning point in his life that taught him about the concept of laughing through tears, “you cannot laugh and be afraid at the same time.”<sup>v</sup> After earning his undergraduate degree in theatre performance from Northwestern University, he joined The Second City improvisational theatre troupe. Immersed in a network of sketch comedians, he met his future collaborators in projects such as *Strangers with Candy* and *The Dana Carvey Show*. Colbert’s professional comedy career launched in 1997 when he joined *The Daily Show* as a caricature of a conservative news correspondent. He performed as a correspondent for the next eight seasons.

In 2005, Comedy Central created *The Daily Show* spin-off, *The Colbert Report*, with a pundit named STEPHEN COLBERT. For the purposes of this book, I refer to the actor as Stephen Colbert and the satirical pundit character as STEPHEN COLBERT, since the latter does yell often. Although, the division between caricature and reality is never quite so clean. *The Colbert Report* featured Stephen Colbert as a “Republican superhero” and a caricatured version of conservative pundits specifically intended to parody Bill O’Reilly and *The O’Reilly Factor*.<sup>vi</sup> Dressed impeccably in suits and ties, his well-coiffed hair gave him the appearance of a news

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anchor. He called President George W. Bush his “hero” and considered them comrades in arms against the “fact-inista.”<sup>vii</sup> COLBERT informed audiences about current events regarding politics, social issues, and religion. Before guests went onstage at *The Colbert Report*, an out-of-character Colbert would tell them, “my character is an idiot. So, disabuse me of my ignorance.”<sup>viii</sup> The idiocy of COLBERT was one of his many exaggerated traits. Viewers could also describe him as egomaniacal, megalomaniacal, intense, ultra-conservative, xenophobic, inaccurate, obtuse, and hyperbolic.

*The Colbert Report* and its star have made a significant impression on American popular culture. The series earned multiple Emmy Awards and Peabody Awards. Stephen Colbert was invited to perform at the White House Correspondents’ Association Dinner in 2006. In 2010, he spoke before United States Congressional Committees and was awarded the first-ever “Golden Tweet Award” by Twitter for having the most retweeted tweet. Ben & Jerry’s even honored the comedian with his own ice cream flavor, Americone Dream. *The Colbert Report* was more than a late-night cable show; it became a popular cultural phenomenon. Colbert’s position as a major player in popular culture has only further solidified since he took the helm of *The Late Show* as the anointed successor to David Letterman, sans COLBERT.<sup>ix</sup>

The premiere episode of *The Colbert Report* drew 1.13 million viewers, forty-seven percent more than the average for that time slot in previous weeks. *The Colbert Report* ended on December 18, 2014, after nine years and 1,447 episodes. The final episode garnered two and a half million live viewers – the highest viewership in the show’s history. Each episode aired twice a day on Comedy Central, and the show also captured significant viewership on various online and cable streaming platforms. Despite the official end of the show, *The Colbert Report* and Colbert continue to flourish in the world of social media. As of August 3, 2018,

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@Stephenathome (Colbert’s personal account) has 18.2 million Twitter followers. The show’s website, ColbertNation.com, reported over 3.3 million “likes” on Facebook in its last season.<sup>x</sup>

Colbert’s on- and off-screen activities illustrate his infotaining style. Infotainment is the consolidation and genre-mixing of information and entertainment in mass media forms.

“Infotainment,” can present itself either in the type of news (celebrity, human interest) or in the presentation of news (sensationalism and ostentatious graphics). This occurs primarily through television programming and began with the onset of cable channels and the Internet. Since individuals have so many channels and media platforms to choose from, the most entertaining are often most successful at garnering high audience viewership numbers. News media increasingly “sell” and promote news headlines through entertaining means. At first, daytime television shows, like *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, and programs with overt political biases, like *Hannity & Colmes*, were the primary means of infotainment, but by the twenty-first century, comedy programs, such as Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, were parodying those forms.

Media critics seem split over the ethical and moral consequences of infotainment. Some media commentators critique infotainment for its lack of seriousness, charging that it places substantive journalism on the same level as sketch comedy. Others argue that the more entertaining the presentation, the more people will care about current events. Regardless of its moral value, infotainment, specifically in comedy programs, is how many Americans consume information. Ignoring infotainment blinds us to how Americans are experiencing their worlds. The “info” refers to the fact that Colbert has become one of the nation’s most effective civic educators, evidenced by an Annenberg study that concluded that audiences found Colbert’s reporting more informative than traditional news sources. In particular, Bruce W. Hardy, senior

researcher at the Annenberg Public Policy Center, claims that the actor did a “better job than other news sources at teaching people about campaign financing” through his on-air analysis of his own political action committee (PAC) in the 2012 election.<sup>xi</sup>

Beyond providing infotainment, Colbert also performs his character’s identity on multiple platforms. The fact that the character on *The Colbert Report* is also named STEPHEN COLBERT creates confusion. In a January 2012 *New York Times* article, media critic Charles McGrath claimed that there were more Stephen Colberts than the actor and his character.<sup>xii</sup> The other Colbert(s) ran for President in South Carolina, testified before Congress about illegal-immigrant farmworkers, and started a Super Political Action Committee (Super PAC) that collected real monetary donations. Acknowledging the confusion of such performances, Colbert opened his Knox College commencement address in 2006 with the following remarks:

My name is Stephen Colbert, but I actually play someone on television named Stephen Colbert, who looks like me and talks like me, but who says things with a straight face he doesn’t mean...I’m not sure which one of us you invited to speak here today. So with your indulgence, I’m just going to talk and let you figure it out.<sup>xiii</sup>

As seen in this speech, the character COLBERT has moved from the television screen to real life. The conflation and co-constitutive nature of Colbert and COLBERT is integral to his impact. As he melds together comedy and real-world experience into a brand of “infotainment,” Colbert also melds together his dual persona. Through the complexity and fluidity of his dual persona, Colbert emerges as a politically savvy and knowledgeable personality who has done far more than caricature conservative Republicans.

Comedian, entertainer, Catholic: Stephen Colbert uses humor to engage in significant public criticism of religious institutions, policies, and doctrines. Religion and the foibles of religious institutions have served as fodder for a number of comedians. In this, then, Colbert is



not unique. What sets Colbert apart is that his critical observations are made more powerful and harder to ignore because he approaches religious material not from the predictable stance of the irreverent secular comedian, but from his position as one of the faithful.

Stephen Colbert and his character dwell at the crossroads of religion and humor. This book is a case study of that intersection: humor as an arena for the expression of religious identities and relationships. Comedy becomes a site for critique and dialogue between lay religious practitioners and their larger, institutional authoritative bodies. Political life in twenty-first-century America is hyperpolarized, a continuation of the Culture Wars. Political scientist Lawrence R. Jacobs claims that “the hyperpolarization of American politics has cascading consequences for the information system,” and communications scholars Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Bruce W. Hardy note that partisan media polarizes where individuals obtain information about politics. Polarized ways of gathering information then affects the nature of politics itself.<sup>xiv</sup> Stephen Colbert and his *The Colbert Report* character reconceive the boundaries between liberal/conservative and traditional/progressive. Stephen Colbert and his humorous personae represent a multiplicity of American Catholic identities, political and religious, and illustrate the complicated relationships between lay and institutional Catholic authority.

In this analysis of Stephen Colbert and *The Colbert Report*, I present a case study of one comedian and his comedic television program in order to dig more deeply into the historical contextualization of a specific form of religious identity, authority, and oratory: the satirical commentator. Colbert and COLBERT give voice to the multiplicity of lived Catholic experiences in America. The different personae provide insight into the mechanisms behind lived religion: the processes of meaning-making and identity creation.

The lived religion approach, focused on the practices and meaning-making interpretations of those with on-the-ground religious experience, allows me to describe and interpret the comedy in its cultural context and historical milieu. The study of lived religion analyzes how people encounter, negotiate, and reconfigure their religious understandings in relation to institutional hierarchies, official teachings, and scriptural texts, and how people use those categories to create, construct, and curate their religious selves. Lived religion studies the particularities of culture and material, on-the-ground aspects of religion in everyday life.<sup>xv</sup> The method explores how individuals and communities make, challenge, and remake religious meaning in their worlds. As a methodological and theoretical framework, lived religion has expanded what constitutes “religion.” I build upon the work of lived religion by exploring the religious identities and meaning-making processes of a humorous mass media phenomenon: Stephen Colbert and his television program, *The Colbert Report*. I align my work with other lived religion scholars who have skillfully attended to material culture and its more popular forms, furthering their work by recognizing that in the media age, “media” (to which material culture has always been a part) is a category that shapes and reflects religious life.

Everyday lived religion happens on television, on the Internet, and in mediated worlds. Religion and media scholars Stewart Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark assert that, “all contemporary institutional, social, and cultural trends take place in a media context.”<sup>xvi</sup> In the twenty-first century, people increasingly practice their religion through digital media, use media to do “religious work,” and employ media narratives as resources for constructing and negotiating their religious worlds. In fact, as Hoover explains, contemporary media practices and worlds “make it possible for new religious forms...to emerge.”<sup>xvii</sup> Religious work is being made and remade by, and in conjunction with, new voices. Those voices have changed scale and speed

with changing media technologies. Television, as a storytelling vehicle, has been a space of religious work for several decades. As religion and media scholar Diane Winston argues, we build our worlds through storytelling and the sacred stories of our time are found on television and other mediated forms. Television, according to Winston, is “a latter-day version of Western traditions, such as hearing scriptures, 'reading' stained glass windows, or absorbing a Passion Play.”<sup>xviii</sup> Television and religion scholar Elijah Siegler succinctly explains that television “complexif[ies]” our meaning-making because it can “communicate religious possibilities, explore religious issues, and ask religious questions.” Televisions themselves may not be inherently sacred, spiritual, or religious, but the medium helps audiences make and unmake their worlds. In this book, television is the medium through which Colbert and COLBERT mold their religious identities and present them to audiences.

Colbert and COLBERT are not just on television. They are “transmediated” subjects, meaning their storytelling occurs across various media outlets.<sup>xix</sup> *The Colbert Report* was on cable television, but many Colbert fans experienced his material through Twitter, Facebook, Internet websites, video streaming services, taped appearances at the White House Correspondent’s Dinner, and presentations at United States Congressional hearings. Beyond Colbert and COLBERT, *The Colbert Report* fans, otherwise known as the Colbert Nation, use transmediated culture to interact with the comedian. Fans wrote blog posts on ColbertNewsHub.com and created nofactzone.net, a website dedicated to the inside scoop on *The Colbert Report*. The Colbert Nation attended Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert’s “Rally to Restore Sanity And/Or Fear,” a gathering at the National Mall in 2010 promoting reasoned discussion and debates in American politics. The Colbert Nation remixes his interviews, creates gifs of video clips, makes cartoon drawings of Stephen Colbert, and circulates Colbert Internet

memes. These fans live in a transmediated world that dissolves the line between cable television, social media and face-to-face interactions, while also blurring the conventional divisions between producer and consumer as they actively engage Colbert’s work, remix it, and pass it on. Something fans create can be seen on television and something they see on television can become part of their interactive personal media world just as quickly. COLBERT’s celebrity antics, and those of his fans, epitomize the twenty-first century’s transmediated culture model.

It is through transmediated mass media that Colbert presents his Catholic identity and comedic commentary about religion in America. Thus, this book develops out of the conversations of lived religion and mass media in order to engage with a space in contemporary American religion not yet fully reached by either theoretical framework separately. I explore how a mass-mediated individual expresses and conveys his ideas about the religion he lives through digital and televisual means. Colbert performs his religious identity through his dual personae, and embodies the ambiguity and complicated nature of Catholicism. Examining Colbert and COLBERT offers a rare window into the process of making religious worlds and constructing wildly divergent religious identities in response to the same religio-socio-political contexts. This book analyzes how Stephen Colbert and *The Colbert Report* present Catholic identity and grapple with issues of authority in twenty-first-century America. Colbert’s interpretation and commentary about religion is outside both the institution and the smaller communities: a window into lived religion brought to you by comedic mass media.

Colbert illustrates and embodies certain complexities of Catholic identity and relationships between Catholic lay and institutional authority. Of course, he does not represent all of the complexity in contemporary American Catholicism. Instead, Colbert’s Catholic identity mirrors that of other dominant images of Catholic representation in his racial and ethnic status as

a middle-aged white man. That does not mean that this is the norm, nor that it should be.

However, in mass media, as in other public arenas, Catholicism is often depicted as white and male, especially in the fields of entertainment, television, and comedy.

Stephen Colbert stands in a historical lineage of public Catholics who navigated the shifting tides of American Catholic authority, from the first American-born bishop John Carroll, through John Ireland and the Americanist controversy, to the authority of media figures such as Fulton Sheen. As Colbert joked during his keynote address at the 68<sup>th</sup> annual Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner (a dinner honoring the first Catholic nominee for the American presidency) on October 17, 2013, “I am proud to be America's most famous Catholic.”<sup>xx</sup> A bold statement in a room full of Cardinals, priests, politicians, actors, and other Catholic celebrities, Colbert references both his intense popularity and his embodiment of both American and Catholic identities. He is the latest incarnation of Catholic religious celebrities and mass mediated broadcasters in the United States.

Colbert uses satire and humor to question hypocrisies and incongruities that he sees in the Roman Catholic Church. He is a Catholic celebrity who can bridge between critical outsider and participating insider. The persona he cultivates employs satire and critical humor to navigate what it means to be an American Catholic and the relationship between lay and institutional authority. Some viewers describe this as “Colbert Catholic[ism].” Colbert Catholicism complicates the existing literature about “cafeteria,” “cultural,” and “thinking” Catholics, the liberal and conservative Catholic divide, and the trajectory of twentieth- and twenty-first-century changes in Catholic authority.

The longitudinal sociological studies of American Catholicism, especially William V. D’Antonio, Michele Dillon, and Mary L. Gautier’s *American Catholics in Transition*, help

situate Stephen Colbert’s Catholic identity, both in and out of character. These scholars describe the historical use of the term “cafeteria Catholicism” as descriptive of Catholics who “selectively value” certain theologies and traditions.<sup>xxi</sup> Conservapedia.com, an online wiki encyclopedia project started in 2006 by Andrew Schafly (Phyllis Schlafly’s son) to combat what he perceives as liberal media bias, has listed Stephen Colbert as a “cafeteria Catholic.”<sup>xxii</sup> This “selectivity” is part of a larger trend in American religious history, specifically the individualism and “seeking” that enraptured sociology of religion for the last few decades.<sup>xxiii</sup> Sociologists of religion, like Wade Clark Roof and Robert Wuthnow, show an increase in supposed religious choice and questioning of traditional authority among those in the “seeker” generation(s). Examining both Stephen Colbert and the COLBERT persona can illuminate the complicated nature of contemporary American Catholicism.

Catholicism is not a fundamentalist tradition, as D’Antonio et al. explain. It is a “living theological tradition that blends faith and reason.”<sup>xxiv</sup> Sociologist Michele Dillon, in *Catholic Identity*, presents this blending through three pro-change groups in the American Catholic Church who maintain their Catholic identities while still confronting specific church teachings and practices on certain issues.<sup>xxv</sup> So, how does Colbert embody and interrogate Catholic identity and authority in twenty-first-century America? Stephen Colbert exemplifies this blending of faith and reason through his satirical character and his personal affirmation of Catholic identity. His satire challenges and criticizes aspects of Catholicism, but still praises institutional authorities in the Catholic Church by befriending Father Jim Martin and Cardinal Timothy Dolan. Colbert appears to transcend the liberal/conservative binary as a Catholic on a television faux-news show who comes to work with ashes on his forehead on Ash Wednesday but still mocks Pope Benedict’s expensive red shoes. Colbert walks a fine line between the progressivism of the pro-

change groups in Dillon’s research and the traditionalism of those he reflects with his over-exaggerated conservative persona. Colbert is neither fully reverent nor fully irreverent. He is an American Catholic.

Colbert and COLBERT both being Catholic helps them make humorous statements and interventions. Catholicism embodies a paradox: being one of the many religions in a pluralistic world; and being arguably the most recognizable institutional church in the world. Catholicism is multifaceted. As scholars Maya Mayblin, Kristin Norget, and Valentina Napolitano explain in *The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader*, the multidimensional aspects of Catholicism arise because the religion is “both through and beyond the ‘sacramental imagination,’ ... a political and institutional form, a contested set of practices, and an embodied and ethical orientation to the world.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Furthermore, Catholicism is a perpetually “crystalizing system of patterns” consistently rearranging structures, traditions, and authorizing agents.<sup>xxvii</sup> Catholicism is supposed to be homogenous, but in reality it is, and has always been, heterogeneous. Perceptions and realities of Catholicism are already paradoxes, so Colbert puts that paradox on stage through the dual personae of Colbert/COLBERT. Ethnographers, and, I would argue, many media studies scholars, often find it difficult to pin down the specifics of Catholicism. To compare the various forms and intricacies leaves scholars feeling center-less and floating. Crafting a definitive version of Catholicism usually prescribes the institutional “authorized” or “sanctioned” form. The “polyphony” of Catholic thought, practice, and identity becomes narrowed.<sup>xxviii</sup> This leads to inquiries into authenticity and authority that the commentaries (and even existence) of Colbert and COLBERT call into question.

Catholicism is both invisible and ubiquitous. It is the institutional organization, the individuals who comprise it, and it is an agent in and of itself. It looms large in the American

imaginary initially as the embodiment of the “other” and then later at the core of American religiosity. Protestant Americans have historically been wary of Catholicism, but since the 1960s, perhaps due in part to Vatican II shifts, a Catholicism that emphasizes the authority of white males has become more integrated into many American understandings of religion. A quarter of the American population is Catholic, the largest “denomination,” if one could call it such because Catholicism is not one thing. It is many and multitudes, but those complexities are often hidden or dismissed in stereotyping and essentializing Catholicism. The perception of the Catholic Church assumes one authority, which in turn leads to lay/clerical conflicts.

Colbert/COLBERT explore the paradox of Catholic multiplicity. He can do so as a lay person in ways that many mediated and televised Catholic clergy have been unable to do. Colbert speaks for, with, and to an audience grappling with seeing Catholicism as multifaceted. Colbert’s Catholicism creates this contemporary paradox of being religious while also mocking certain aspects of religion primarily because Catholicism is often defined with and against the institution of the Catholic Church. There is a perception of a right answer, a *real* way of being religious. While that perception is false and there are hundreds of ways in which to be Catholic in the contemporary world, the perceptions and assumptions remain. To be Catholic is to constantly define and redefine oneself with and against the perception of a unified, authoritative, and institutional church.

Colbert and COLBERT illustrate a Catholic paradox in an era that questions truth and embraces digital media. In the porous boundaries of news, entertainment, and culture in the age of digital media, Colbert and COLBERT infotained audiences about current events. In their capacity as celebrities, they braided together consumerism, democracy, and individualism. COLBERT is an individual pundit who promotes his politically-socially-religiously conservative



brand. His influence is built upon the scores of viewers who watch his television shows or interact with him through digital mass media. Social scientist Mel van Elteren connects contemporary celebrity culture to cultural narcissism that began in the 1970s with a focus on the individual, criticized in “Tom Wolfe’s article on ‘The Me Decade’ in 1976 and Cristopher Lasch’s [1978] *The Culture of Narcissism*.”<sup>xxix</sup> That cultural narcissism has only grown, van Elteren suggests, with the onslaught of new media technologies such as the Internet, cell phones, cable television, and social media. As literary and cultural critic William Deresiewicz describes, “the camera has created a culture of celebrity; the computer is creating a culture of connectivity.”<sup>xxx</sup> New technologies and celebrity culture are intertwined, influencing, reaching, and communicating with broader audiences.

Colbert’s influence comes from his comedic television program. Because comedy and humor are so tied to identity and intersectionality, it can read the *mores* of society, what historian Joseph Boskin refers to as humor’s ability to act as a “cultural index, a reflector of social change and conflict.”<sup>xxxi</sup> Comedy and humor are excellent indicators of cultural codes. Communication studies professor Arthur Asa Berger contends that language and actions of humor and comedy “can be ‘used’ to gain valuable insights into the ethos and worldview” of cultures.<sup>xxxii</sup> What groups of people think, do, and subconsciously understand can be glimpsed in what makes them laugh. At times, comedy adheres to Freud’s analysis of the joke; it addresses incongruities between belief and action.<sup>xxxiii</sup> When a comedian opposes through humor, it is often in confrontation with authority. *The Colbert Report* uses irony to present material in which the intended meaning opposes the expressions of the words utilized. As a comedian, Stephen Colbert uses humor to confront authoritative ideas or structures, including those close to his Catholic

religion, the authority of the Catholic Church. In *The Colbert Report*, most of the humor regarding religion stems from the incongruities between what *is* and what *should be*.

Of course, just as culture and society are not singular, neither is comedy. Colbert uses humor to present his Catholic identity, to illustrate the complexities of life, and to confront authority. Humor helps break down barriers, claims identities, and affirms a sense of community. Humor attacks, parodies, critiques, satirizes, and mocks. The topics comedians choose to satirize or joke about are often central to a culture or society. As Eric Idle, of the British comedy troupe *Monty Python*, concisely phrased it, “if anything can survive the probe of humor it is clearly of value.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> Politics, identity, and even religion, are tested through humor.

Colbert infotained audiences through *The Colbert Report* persona on a variety of transmediated screens. That persona highlighted America’s political Culture Wars with a rhetorical style that replicated and probed the twenty-first-century categories of liberal and conservative. He used the same rhetorical style when presenting his Catholic identity and satirizing certain incongruities in religious authenticity and authority. One of Colbert’s neologisms encapsulates twenty-first-century sentiments of hyperpolarization and the questioning of authority and facts: truthiness.

In the pilot episode of *The Colbert Report*, COLBERT began his segment “The Wørd” with a word he created, *truthiness*. According to The American Dialect Society, which chose the word to be its 2005 Word of the Year, truthiness “refers to the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true.”<sup>xxxv</sup> As COLBERT explained in the segment, “I don’t trust books. They’re all fact, no heart.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> Colbert felt that the word *truth* was not “dumb enough,” saying in a *New York Times* interview, “I wanted a silly

word that would feel wrong in your mouth.”<sup>xxxvii</sup> Truthiness is not the exact opposite of truth; instead it is a comedic play on truth.

Truthiness epitomizes the satirical nature of *The Colbert Report*. According to communication scholars Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson in *Satire TV*, Colbert’s ironic humor is defined by his “double-layered” speech. Colbert’s meanings demonstrate a critical edge that lies “below the surface, or between the lines.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> The problem arises when we try to interpret what Stephen Colbert the actor means and how to classify these comical and satirical elements. Context usually helps establish the meaning, but comedy complicates this. The ambiguous nature of the “double-voiced utterances of parodic performance,” as television studies scholar Jeffrey P. Jones points out, allows for a great deal of latitude in audience interpretations.<sup>xxxix</sup> Colbert lives in that blurry line between meanings. The ambiguity changes how audiences are meant to perceive the television program and the character. An audience member’s preexisting political ideologies shape how they perceive Colbert and his humor. Both conservative and liberal audiences consider Colbert funny (at least in 2009), but “conservatives were more likely to report that Colbert only pretends to be joking and genuinely meant what he said,” and conversely, liberal audiences “were more likely to report that Colbert used satire and was not serious when offering political statements.”<sup>xl</sup> Interpreting COLBERT as a “truthiness-teller” places him in category where he both means and does not mean what he says. The double-speak is tied up in how audiences read the character.

Truthiness parodies with truth as *The Colbert Report* parodies a “straight news...program,” according to communication and rhetoric scholar Amber Day because audiences understand the television program to be a “comedic send-up of the format.”<sup>xli</sup> Parodic techniques, according to communication and rhetoric scholar Robert Hariman, combine

“imitation and alteration,” but what begins as a reversal of binaries through mimicry exposes the limits of those binaries.<sup>xliii</sup> Neither solely radical nor conservative, parody is both simultaneously. Audiences often view Colbert’s show as doublespeak because the character says one thing and means another. The dual persona of Colbert and COLBERT, but with the same embodiment and name, only furthers the doublespeak confusion.

STEPHEN COLBERT parodies current media pundits by pontificating in an absurd and extreme manner. As part of his goal of “parody with a point,” Colbert lambasts media pundits through satire.<sup>xliiii</sup> Satire is an artistic form that “makes fun of human folly and vice by holding people accountable for their public actions.”<sup>xliiv</sup> The purpose of *The Colbert Report* is to be funny, as a senior producer at Comedy Central described the show, and make humor about what they find “interesting or compelling,” and all of it serves to make audiences laugh.<sup>xliv</sup> The jokes presented in this satirical format make fun of various aspects of society and culture, religion included.

Colbert is not separate from the political and cultural world he mocks. The conservative COLBERT embraces the extremism of polarized politics and religious language. COLBERT assumes that America is a Christian nation, co-constitutively founded with Christian values imbued in the political realm and the democratizing of Christian denominations in the religious realm.<sup>xlvi</sup> Colbert parses the nature of what is “religio-political” differently through the satirical quality he employs. COLBERT equates conservative Christianity with goodness, truth, real religion, and correct political leanings, but because it comes from the humorist Colbert’s lips, those sentiments emphasize a doubleness, a playing with reality, a truthiness.

COLBERT performs truthiness by blatantly making up facts and using his hyperbolic punditry to highlight the forcefulness of believing something is true. As actor Stephen Colbert

explained in a 2009 *Rolling Stone* article, the character COLBERT does this by arguing beyond reality: “Liberals will come on the show and say, ‘Well conservatives want this to be a theocracy.’ And I’ll say, ‘well, why not, the Founding Fathers were all fundamentalist Christians.’ And they’ll say, ‘no they weren’t.’ I say, ‘Yes, they were, and if I’m wrong, I will eat your encyclopedias.’ ...”<sup>xlvi</sup> Such hyperbolic language epitomizes the infotainment genre Colbert embraces with the term “truthiness.”

Ironically, Colbert’s type of celebrity, that of media star, is considered more trustworthy than contemporary politicians or world leaders, according to political scientists Darrell M. West and John M. Orman. This is because media celebrities’ fame transcends personal integrity and public service.<sup>xlvi</sup> A comedian who creates a word “truthiness” to describe the gut feeling of truth over fact can be perceived as more trustworthy than a politician because of his celebrity status. That celebrity status makes Colbert influential in American society, as well as a reflection of that society.

As a celebrity faux news pundit, Colbert’s religiously-imbued commentary becomes bolded and pronounced. He punches up the infotainment with religious material and his religious identity becomes part of his celebrity personae. As Kathryn Lofton explains in *Consuming Religion*, the connection between celebrity and infotainment has only deepened since the 1980s. A celebrity’s religious engagements and entanglements are fodder for information and entertainment. Considering the roles Colbert and COLBERT play in American political life, it makes sense that his celebrity impacts his ability to be seen by some as a “meaningful religious authority.”<sup>xlix</sup> Colbert’s influence does not reach the levels of Beyoncé, but audiences still consider, interpret, and contend with his religiously-focused remarks.

Beyond commentary about religion, Colbert’s celebrity status is imbued with sacrality. As religion scholar Gary Laderman remarks, celebrity culture has influenced American religious history in part because “technologically advanced forms of communication brought entertaining popular cultures into the private lives of listeners and viewers.” There is a sacrality, Laderman notes, to celebrities in that their images could be used as alternatives to other forms of meaning-making and purpose. Celebrities have not replaced religion writ large, but there are religious aspects to celebrity culture that merge “entertainment and devotional rituals, commerce and sacred auras, in ways that transform public and popular figures as well as fans themselves.”<sup>1</sup> Colbert’s celebrity status is more tied to a particular religion, Catholicism, than to being sacred in-and-of himself. However, the COLBERT persona might disagree. That guy has a God complex.

## **CHAPTERS**

This book is a case study of the intersection between lived religion and mass media through the work of Stephen Colbert. Chapter two provides the historical context for Colbert. I examine how this contemporary character compares to his lineage of Catholic figures who present their views of Catholicism to Americans through radio, film, and television. In the twentieth century, Catholic figures have consistently used mass media technologies to enact religious authority. These mass-mediated figures informed national audiences about Catholic ideologies and politics, created an imagined, idealized Catholic life, and joined together American and Catholic identities. While previous eras had media figures such as Father Charles Coughlin and Bishop Fulton Sheen who were official clergy members, Colbert is a lay Catholic. Colbert marks a significant shift because he is not a priest, does not portray a clergy member on *The Colbert Report*, and utilizes over-exaggerated humorous segments to address issues of

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Catholic authority for twenty-first-century audiences. *The Colbert Report’s* famous religion segment, “Yahweh or No Way” serves as a lens through which to examine lay religious authority as COLBERT judges contemporary culture on God’s behalf.

In chapter three, I explore Colbert’s role as a catechist. Colbert presents himself as a Catholic on- and off-screen with humor that combines catechetical knowledge and satirical comedy. On *The Colbert Report*, he uses his Catholic knowledge and identity as fodder for his television persona. He describes “Catholic Benders” and quizzes guests on the intricacies of Catholic theology. For example, in 2011, he challenged rock star Jack White to a “Catholic-Throwdown” in a segment extended for digital media viewers. In journalistic interviews, out-of-character Colbert describes his religious life and family history to mass audiences through print and digital media. Stephen Colbert is a contemporary paradox in mass media: a comedian who can truly mock and identify with his religion simultaneously. His relationships and interviews with contemporary Catholic authorities demonstrate how he reifies and critiques the institutional Catholic Church.

Catholic comedians control late night comedy programs in the twenty-first century, from Jimmy Fallon to Conan O’Brien to Stephen Colbert. Chapter four examines Colbert as part of a distinct group of Catholic comedians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many of whom mine their Catholicism for humorous material. A defining characteristic of Catholic humor are the comedians’ relationships with the institutional Catholic Church and their own Catholic identity. Colbert is distinct from his contemporaneous comedians because he continually asserts that he is a “practicing” Catholic, and his mild critiques do not disturb America’s institutional Catholic Church. This chapter describes Catholic comedy using Don Novello, George Carlin, Louis C.K., and Jim Gaffigan as examples.

The fifth chapter asks about the broader implications of this television show. What does COLBERT and Colbert’s religious humor reveal about the conflicts and tensions in contemporary American Catholic life? Colbert’s lay catechist role (one who teaches people about Catholicism) makes him a type of Catholic who searches for his own individual interpretations of Catholic faith, not unlike other Catholics today. American Catholicism is not a unified entity, and the multiplicity of the Colbert(s) reflects the multiplicity and diversity in American Catholic identities. Colbert does not represent the vast groups of Catholics of differing ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds, but he does illustrate an often ignored form of Catholic multiplicity: thinking Catholics, cultural Catholics, cafeteria Catholics, and lukewarm Catholics. Here, I put Colbert’s theological musings in context with his comedy to define “Colbert Catholicism,” a type of Catholicism that sees humor as beneficial to ones’ faith. Colbert Catholicism also uses humor and satire to grapple with twenty-first century conflicts in the Catholic Church, specifically the priest sex abuse scandals.

Chapter six contends with Colbert, COLBERT, and the extreme polarization of the twenty-first-century’s Culture Wars. The turn of the twenty-first century and first decades of this millennium are marked by the rise of cable news and celebrity pundits, fractures in religious identities on political fault lines, and the increasing number of religious “nones.” Colbert’s character is a right-wing political media star who plays up the divide of liberal and conservative for comedic effect, as evidenced by the 2010 Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear, co-hosted with Jon Stewart. Colbert’s Culture Wars rhetoric came to a head during a critical moment in the history of *The Colbert Report*. In 2014, an Asian-American activist tweeted a response to what she felt was a racist tweet from the show. #CancelColbert became a media phenomenon that put Colbert and the COLBERT persona at the heart of the Culture Wars. However, Colbert’s new



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position in the Culture Wars did not just perpetuate them, but actually illustrated a reconfiguration of the alliances of left and right, conservative and liberal, in American religious life.

Chapter seven looks beyond *The Colbert Report*, to Colbert’s move to CBS’s *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* in 2015. Even in its earliest episodes, there have been moments on *The Late Show* where Colbert catechizes to broader American audiences than those of his cable show; moments where Vice President Joe Biden and Colbert describe how their faith helps them cope with tragedy; moments where Colbert pokes fun at Pope Francis’ 2015 visit to America; and moments where Colbert sits behind a confessional, admitting his “sins” as jokes to the audience. Colbert still challenges other celebrities to Catholic-offs, quizzing them on Catholic doctrine. The character COLBERT left the air in 2014, but “truthiness” has never been more relevant, especially evident in the 2016 election where false claims and “fake news” drew COLBERT back into the spotlight. This epilogue ponders Colbert’s role in the 2016 election and the position of “America’s Most Famous Catholic” in a post-*The Colbert Report* world.

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<sup>i</sup> “Tip/Wag - Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn & Stoner Dogs,” *The Colbert Report*, May 6, 2013, <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/ltsnqq/the-colbert-report-tip-wag---catholic-diocese-of-brooklyn--stoner-dogs>.

<sup>ii</sup> David Gibson, “Colbert the Catechist,” *Sacred and Profane*, accessed January 2, 2015, <http://davidgibson.religionnews.com/2013/02/13/colbert-the-catechist/>; Patrick R. Manning, “Truth and Truthiness,” *America Magazine*, accessed January 2, 2015, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/truth-and-truthiness>.

<sup>iii</sup> CBS Sunday Morning, “Stephen Colbert on Getting to Play Himself,” *CBS Sunday Morning*, September 6, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2QLoGc6pjc>.

<sup>iv</sup> Joel Lovell, “Stephen Colbert on Making The Late Show His Own,” *GQ*, August 17, 2015, <http://www.gq.com/story/stephen-colbert-gq-cover-story>.

<sup>v</sup> America Media, *Colbert Catechism: Stephen Colbert Professes His Faith to Fr. James Martin*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-zxn-YGUI4>.

<sup>vi</sup> Charles McGrath, “How Many Stephen Colberts Are There? - NYTimes.com,” January 4, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/08/magazine/stephen-colbert.html?pagewanted=all>.

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xv Sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Leger coined the term “lived religion” in studying what the lay people believe on-the-ground and how they enact those beliefs in practice. David Hall compiled essays from Hervieu-Leger and others to explore the shape and character of the lived religion conversation. In the anthology, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, Robert A. Orsi encouraged scholars of religion to use multiple methodologies to look beyond religious institutions and into the everyday life of practitioners. See David D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America: Toward A History of Practice* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

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xxi William V. D’Antonio, Michele Dillon, and Mary L. Gautier CARA at Georgetown University, *American Catholics in Transition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 47

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- <sup>xlix</sup> Kathryn Lofton, *Consuming Religion* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).
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## APPENDIX

This interdisciplinary book employs religious studies, media studies, and American studies to engage questions of identity, representation and authority. In terms of methodology, I utilize discourse analysis, textual analysis, historical contextualization, and media ethnography of a cultural product to narrate this story. I specifically analyze the connection between the text and the context by examining the content of *The Colbert Report* and the journalism and media surrounding the show in connection with broader aspects of American religious history. I explore both the content of *The Colbert Report* and the “religion around” Colbert and COLBERT.<sup>i</sup> My analysis of Stephen Colbert as a religious broadcaster relies on the reception studies of *The Colbert Report* by other scholars, especially those by Jill Dierberg and Lynn Schofield Clark.<sup>ii</sup> Most academic studies of religion and media are sociological reception studies. In complementary contrast, this book fits into a more narrative style reminiscent of other American religious history and ethnographic scholarship.

My primary sources include a self-curated catalogue of 1,700 videos, transcriptions of over 500 video clips, and hundreds of media and journalism reports. My research also includes interviews with Father James Martin, S.J. and Comedy Central writers and staff. Father James Martin, S.J., editor of *America Magazine*, the “Priest of the Colbert Nation” and a frequent guest on the show, writes extensively about religion and humor.<sup>iii</sup> In a project like this one, primary documents and secondary sources often merge and sorting through the immense amount of materials is a never-ceasing task.

This media ethnography has two parts: in-person ethnography and digital ethnography. Before *The Colbert Report* ended in December 2014, I attended the show where I engaged in participant-observation methodology as an audience member and stood in the stand-by line for

four tapings, conducting field observations and interviewing audience members. I noted the interactions of audience members, stage managers, and actors. I also explored the sets, material culture, and performance materials associated with the show both in person and digitally in order to understand how the show is produced and to interpret the nuances of that production. I conducted over thirty in-person interviews with audience members at *The Colbert Report*.

I began my research at a fortuitous moment, although it did not feel so in the moment. My research was initially going to involve more in-person ethnographic work. However, in April 2014, CBS announced that Stephen Colbert would be the next host of the Late Show, replacing David Letterman. This project shifted significantly towards one of more digital ethnography and content analysis, with one site visit in November 2014. The content analysis began in earnest in October 2014, aided by *The Colbert Report*’s searchable website. I could type any phrase or word into the search feature and it would populate the page with all of the videos that mention or are connected to that phrase. These videos could then be sorted by “most popular” (meaning most viewed), “most recent” (describing when the video had been released), and “most relevant” (meaning that the search algorithm dictated the terms of pertinence). I did not assume that these groupings were correct, but it was a useful starting point for initial findings. By December 2014, the initial searches were complete and I was slowly watching individual videos through the website and transcribing them.

In mid-January 2015, I glanced at a Facebook post from *The Colbert Report*. Comedy Central would be removing *The Colbert Report* videos, in their entirety, from the website in 10 days. In a panic, I worked with every librarian, media specialist, and computer-savvy friend I had to save 1,700 of the most useful videos to watch later for transcription. Over the next four months, I transcribed 581 clips from *The Colbert Report*. These transcriptions formed the basis

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of my work for this book, although I ended up incorporating journalistic and *Late Show with Stephen Colbert* videos as research progressed.

Digital media and the Internet have provided even more opportunities for greater media anthropology research, and I conducted virtual ethnographies of blogs, comment boards, and other Internet postings. When discussing the twenty-first century, I use the terms digital age and media age interchangeably because most media today can be accessed through online means, thus making it digital media. Even film and television are made digitally through digital projection and filming practices. In my media ethnography, I turned to documents found through social media and Internet sources to gain a fuller picture of the reach of *The Colbert Report*. Like other media scholars, I ground my abstractions in the particularities of a specific program that is “socio-historically dependent and embedded in complex social relations and negotiations.”<sup>iv</sup> Analysis of blog posts, video comments, and *The Colbert Report* content provides a map of the intersecting and often contradictory American religious landscapes in ways that surveys and sociological data cannot: through the humor and popular culture of a mass-mediated television program.

### **Alphabetical List of Search Terms**

Advent  
Almighty  
Atheist/Atheism  
Atone Phone  
Bible  
Blitzkrieg of Grinchitude  
Buddha  
Buddhism/Buddhist  
Catholic  
Catholicism  
Catholics  
Chanukkah/Hanukkah  
Christ  
Christianity

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Christian(s)  
Christmas  
Church/Churches  
Clergy  
Devil  
Easter  
Easter Under Attack  
Evangelical  
Faith  
God (s)  
Hindu/Hinduism  
Islam  
Jain  
Jesus  
Jewish  
Jews  
Judaism  
Krishna  
Lent  
Lord  
Mass  
Meditate/Meditation  
Muslim  
Nun(s)  
Papal  
Passover  
Pastor(s)  
Pentecost  
Pesach  
Pope  
Pray  
Prayer  
Priest(s)  
Protestants  
Rabbi  
Religion  
Religions  
Religious  
Rosary  
Rosh Hashana  
Santeria  
Sikh  
Sin  
Spirit(s)  
Spiritual but not religious  
Spirituality



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Supernatural  
Unitarian  
Voodoo  
Vodun  
Yom Kippur

### **Selected *The Colbert Report* Videos**

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<sup>i</sup> I borrow this phrase from W. Clark Gilpin’s work on the religious contexts surrounding American poet, Emily Dickinson. For more, see W. Clark Gilpin, *Religion Around Emily Dickinson* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State Press, 2014).

<sup>ii</sup> Jill E. Dierberg, “Searching for Truth(iness): Mapping the Religio-Political Landscape and Identity of Christian Emerging Adults through a Reception Study of ‘The Colbert Report’” (Ph.D., University of Denver, 2012), <http://search.proquest.com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/pqdtft/docview/1112843336/abstract/372B17F7C1A343C9PQ/1?accountid=12861>; Lynn Schofield Clark and Jill Dierberg, “Digital Storytelling and Collective Religious Identity in a Moderate to Progressive Youth Group,” in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 147–54.

<sup>iii</sup> Martin’s most prominent work on humor and religion: James Martin, *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life*, Reprint edition (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2012).

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