

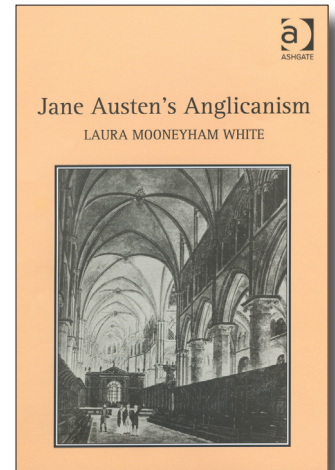
# New

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# Jane Austen's Anglicanism

Laura Mooneyham White, University of Nebraska, Lincoln



In her re-examination of Jane Austen's Anglicanism, Laura Mooneyham White suggests that engaging with Austen's world in all its strangeness and remoteness reveals the novelist's intensely different presumptions about the cosmos and human nature. While Austen's readers often project postmodern and secular perspectives onto an Austen who reflects their own times and values, White argues that viewing Austen's Anglicanism through the lens of primary sources of the period, including the complex history of the Georgian church to which Austen was intimately connected all her life, provides a context for understanding the central conflict between Austen's malicious wit and her family's testimony to her Christian piety and kindness. White draws connections between Austen's experiences with the clergy, liturgy, doctrine and religious readings and their fictional parallels in the novels; shows how orthodox Anglican concepts such as natural law and the Great Chain of Being resonate in Austen's work; and explores Austen's awareness of the moral problems of authorship relative to God as Creator. She concludes by surveying the ontological and moral gulf between the worldview of *Emma* and Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, arguing that the evangelical earnestness of Austen's day had become a figure of mockery by the late nineteenth century.

**Contents:** PART 1: JANE AUSTEN AND ANGLICANISM: Introduction; Jane Austen's religious inheritance: the Georgian Church; Jane Austen as an Anglican and Anglicanism in the novels; Austen and the Anglican worldview. PART 2: THE SINS OF THE AUTHOR: Word-play, candor, and malice; World-making; Coda: Austen and *The Importance of Being Earnest*; Bibliography; Index.

*"The place of religion in Jane Austen's life and fiction has become a subject of heated debate. Was she a pious spinster, or did she wear her faith lightly? Do her novels offer evidence of the strength of her faith or provide a refutation of it? Laura Mooneyham White's Jane Austen's Anglicanism persuasively argues that many of us have fundamentally misunderstood elements of the Church of England and Christian faith in Austen's era. This brilliant, learned book sets out to show us what we have missed, with clear, factual explanations and provocative interpretations on every page. It will have students and scholars alike reading Austen's work through new eyes."*

—Devoney Looser, University of Missouri

## About the Author:

**Laura Mooneyham White** is Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Her scholarship focuses on the novels of Jane Austen and other works of nineteenth-century British literature.

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