

The Rev Dr John Hughes

Influential Cambridge theologian and academic tipped for high office in the Church of England who died in a car crash

John Hughes, the highly popular Dean of Chapel and Chaplain at Jesus College, Cambridge, was recognised by his peers as one of the most significant Anglican thinkers of his generation.

In a speech to the General Synod of the Church of England after Hughes's death in a car crash, the Bishop of Coventry, the Right Rev Dr Christopher Cocksorth, said he had been on the point of nominating Hughes, at only 35, to the Faith and Order Advisory Commission of the General Synod — the senior theological body in the Church.

An expert on Anglican social thought, Hughes helped the church to play its role in the public sphere. He was noted for his ability to speak in an "accessible" way and regularly shared platforms with politicians such as Lord Myners and the Liberal Democrat MP Sarah Teather, and with political theorists such as Robert (Lord) Skidelsky.

He touched the lives of hundreds of students as a supervisor across the university, a lecturer in theology and the leader of pastoral care at Jesus College. All who knew him commented on his intelligence, affability and childlike sense of humour. Students recalled how his "boyish cheekiness" shone through in his *Doctor Who*-themed sermons or in the choir's sponsored run, undertaken in cassocks.

Hughes died on his way back from an ordination, driving to a First Mass — just two of many such events in his

His enthusiasm for The Muppet Show remained a mystery to his friends

diary this year. He would travel the length of the country for a wedding, baptism, funeral or confirmation.

John Hughes was born in 1978 in Exeter, the only child of Hywel and Janet Hughes, a hospital engineer and a secretary, who survive him. He grew up in the nearby village of Kenton. His father was Welsh and only Wales rivalled the West Country in his affections.

As a youth he attended Dawlish Community College then read theology and religious studies at Jesus College, Cambridge, and obtained a first; a third-year undergraduate essay was published as his first academic paper in *Modern Theology*. A theologian might aspire to this at some stage; Hughes was writing at that level from the start. After a year at Merton



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College, Oxford, he returned to Cambridge, to Emmanuel College, to work on a PhD on theological understandings of labour and train for the Anglican ministry at Westcott House. A curacy near his birthplace in Exeter followed with ordination as a deacon and as a priest, after which he returned to Cambridge, and to Jesus College, as Chaplain in 2009. He soon became Dean and was elected to a fellowship.

Once, while walking through the college court deep in thought, he fell into a 6ft hole. A college porter rescued him and he escaped with only minor injuries — a tale he loved to tell to all the freshers, whom he always made an effort to get to know, not least through "Dean's drinks", welcoming new students to the college in his

Devonshire way with cider and cream tea. While intellectually mature beyond his years, he never lost a certain sense of fun. His enthusiasm for *The Muppet Show* remained a mystery to his friends, and he once gave a brilliant talk at Merton College, Oxford, on the metaphysics and politics of John Wycliffe. He delivered the lecture dressed as Wycliffe, complete with false beard, and removed the college's portrait of the proto-reformer, for use as a prop. The prank might have cost him a sharp reprimand had he not been held in such high esteem.

His commitment to the Christian faith began as a child, when he pulled down a copy of the Book of Common Prayer from his parents' bookshelves. He loved the Church of England

profoundly. He stood in a lineage of Anglo-Catholicism that looked back before the Reformation for its cultural and theological bearings, rather than to Rome, but he was a committed ecumenist.

Central to his intellectual outlook was a disdain for lazy associations and divisions that he considered unhelpful and limiting. For instance, he combined left-wing politics with an admiration for the Queen that could only properly be called devotion. Moreover, he was on to "Blue Labour" developments in British politics well ahead of the curve. Contemporary Church of England assumptions that the parish system was yesterday's news angered him. His practical outlook was grounded in the conviction that God works through culture

and matter, and people and places: "Grace perfects nature", as Thomas Aquinas put it. As such he was an "integralist", to use his favourite theological word: whether that meant turning to both the Greek Fathers and Latin Fathers, or his enthusiasm for Radiohead and the Killers alongside Palestrina and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

These instincts led him to join up with a group of theologians working in Cambridge when he was an undergraduate: the approach of the group was later to be known as "Radical Orthodoxy" (after the title of their collection of essays). The three editors of this volume remained friends and colleagues: John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock, who was to be his PhD supervisor.

At one stage Hughes sported an intriguing T-shirt bearing the injunction "Liturgically Consummate your Philosophy" — a reference to the subtitle of Pickstock's newly published *After Writing*. Among his other work he edited *The Unknown God: Sermons Responding to the New Atheists* (2013), and was the author of *The Politics of Forgiveness: A Theological Exploration of King Lear*.

Pastoral work, however, always took priority over reading, writing or teaching. He would be up at any hour in the night to see someone in need, and never saw this as an intrusion. He could effort-

He combined left-wing politics with admiration for the Queen

lessly have gone on to hold some high office, either in the church or in the university. He certainly did not hanker after fame or wealth: as his means increased, all that really changed was the purchase of more and better wine for when friends called round — and, as only those closest to him could know, he gave even more of his income away.

There was always a Beatrice to his Dante, and he hoped to marry, but he had no partner at the time of his death. More than 1,000 people attended his funeral Mass at Ely Cathedral.

The Rev Dr John Hughes, Dean of Chapel and Chaplain, Jesus College, Cambridge, was born on December 13, 1978. He died in a car crash on June 29, 2014, aged 35

Marty Thau

Music mogul who discovered the New York Dolls, recorded with the Ramones and co-produced Blondie's debut single

When Marty Thau discovered the New York Dolls, by his own admission he could not decide "if they were the greatest group I'd ever seen or the worst". He concluded that the question was irrelevant: they were different, striking and exciting enough to turn popular music on its head. Thau became their manager and the group went on to inspire the punk movement.

Thau — whose name rhymed with the Chinese communist leader and was widely known in the business as "Chairman Thau" — also played a pivotal role in launching the careers of the Ramones, Blondie and Suicide.

When he stumbled upon the New York Dolls playing at the Mercer Arts Centre in Greenwich Village after having

dinner with his wife, Betty, one night in 1972, Thau was already a music industry veteran with a decade-long record as a promoter, manager and producer. In his unpublished memoir, he recalled: "I had never seen or heard anything like this bunch of roguish scoundrels, who made most everyone else in the world's rock 'n' roll spotlight look tame."

Their songs were "loud and hard ghetto music about girls, sex, drugs, loneliness, heart-break and the rites of teenage romance". Thau was equally taken with the way the band looked, "decked out in leather and leopard skin with bouffant hairdos, black nail polish, lipstick, six-inch platform boots, chopped jeans, feather boas, armbands and pantyhose". He brought them to



Thau, below, stumbled upon the New York Dolls playing in Greenwich Village

London, where they opened for Rod Stewart and the Faces at Wembley Arena. The trip was marred by tragedy when the Dolls's drummer, Billy Murcia, drowned in a bathtub after taking a drug overdose. The death, however, only added to the group's notoriety and after a bidding war they signed to Mercury Records. Thau continued managing them until 1975 when he resigned in pro-

test at the group's continued and copious drug abuse. He handed over his anarchic charges to future Sex Pistols impresario Malcolm McLaren.

Thau's next discovery was the Ramones, with whom he recorded the demos of *I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend* and *Judy Is a Punk*. The following year he co-produced *X Offender*, the debut single by Blondie, and in 1977 he

oversaw the first album by Suicide, which he released on his own Red Star label. Thau brought the duo to Britain where their avant-garde minimalism was not appreciated by fans of Elvis Costello and the Clash; at one gig in Glasgow an axe was thrown on stage. Yet Suicide went on to become one of the most influential groups of the era.

Martin Thau was born in the Bronx in 1938. After studying at New York University, he briefly joined the advertising department of *Billboard* magazine and left to manage Tony Orlando (who was going out with his cousin). In 1970 he set up the production company Inherit, with Van Morrison and John Cale among his clients. He is survived by his daughter, Leslie Bernard, a tennis coach based in Virginia.

Marty Thau, music executive, was born on December 7, 1938. He died of renal failure on February 13, 2014, aged 75