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Modern Intellectual History, 13, 3 (2016), pp. 805–817 © Cambridge University Press 2015
doi:10.1017/S1479244315000165

THE EVANGELICAL MIND IN A SECULAR AGE

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Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Randall J. Stephens and Karl Giberson, *The Anointed: Evangelical Truth in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011)

Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012)

"Secular intellectuals have not been kind to the evangelical mind," writes historian Molly Worthen in the opening sentence of *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*. Her history of evangelical thought after World War II is an extended effort to understand why. The answers, it turns out, entail not only specific and important critiques of evangelical theology, but also much larger trajectories in the modern intellectual history of the United States. Theology, after all, was once "the queen of the sciences," the very foundation of all other intellectual labor, and remained central to American academic and intellectual culture well into the nineteenth century. Beginning at least with Thomas Jefferson in the United States, however, main currents in Protestant theology and elite intellectual life began their slow and steady divergence, a process that reached critical mass early in the twentieth century. Nowhere has this divergence been more evident, or created more crisis and drama, than among evangelicals.

Historian Mark Noll wrote an evangelical intellectual's lament of this fracture twenty years ago in his influential *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, a lament extended and amplified by the more recently published *The Anointed: Evangelical Truth in a Secular Age*, co-authored by historian Randall Stephens and physicist Karl Giberson. While Worthen tracks the ramifications of the secular–evangelical rift among elite (evangelical) thinkers in prestigious (evangelical) venues, Stephens and Giberson document the more populist instantiations of the divide in science, history, and elsewhere. Reading these two books together,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244315000165 Published online by Cambridge University Press

one sees with particular clarity that evangelical theology, despite its significant political and cultural inroads, has stimulated pervasive and persistent anti-intellectualism and pseudo-intellectualism, each operating at registers high and low. How to make sense of these anti- and alternative intellectual cultures—and how to think and write more generally about the religious and political fallout from the great collision of Christian orthodoxy and modern thought—stands as one of the great challenges of contemporary intellectual history. It's a challenge with implications both for our understanding of religion in the twentieth century and for the practice of intellectual history itself.

Most obviously, secular intellectuals have not been kind to evangelicalism because they are, well, secular—and therefore have no transcendent reason to tolerate its resistance to established academic norms. (One might add that evangelical intellectuals, like Noll, Stephens, and Giberson, have often not been terribly kind to the evangelical mind either.) The United States has yet to experience mass secularization, such as occurred in northern and western Europe after World War II, yet American intellectuals did indeed shed their religious commitments in great numbers over the last century. By the 1920s the historical profession had wed itself to positivist empiricism, as had scholars across the arts and sciences. Theology made a brief reappearance in secular public life during the Cold War fueled suburban revival of the 1950s, when Protestant neoorthodoxy helped frame the power politics and moral quandaries of the nuclear age. But even then major religious thinkers like Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich labored under the shadow cast by radio preachers and self-help gurus. When I taught a course called "Popular Religion in 20th-Century America" as a graduate student in the early 2000s, for example, a professor of mine, educated at Yale in the 1950s, asked with all sincerity, "isn't *all* religion popular religion?" For many similarly educated scholars, religion was no longer intellectually serious, and had not been for a long time.

The loss of religion's intellectual standing in the twentieth century had consequences for all fields of history, but most especially for intellectual history. Put simply, religion nearly vanished from the historiography of modern America. Historian Jon Butler a decade ago famously described this disappearance with the metaphor of the jack-in-the-box.[1] Though a constant presence in work on early America, he noted, religion popped up only rarely from the Civil War on. Scholarship on religion in the modern US has exploded since Butler wrote his essay, but, to most intellectual historians, twentieth-century theology remains a jack-in-the-box: surprising when it appears at all, and useful for little more than a good laugh.

[1] Jon Butler, "Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History," *Journal of American History* 90/4 (March 2004), 1357–78.

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Even the now commonplace notion that theology mattered deeply to early Americans, elite and popular, required an upstream struggle against the powerful currents of secularization and delegitimization. Pioneering twentieth-century intellectual historians Perry Miller and Henry May, in particular, championed the study of theology in secular disciplines and departments, even as the historical guild decisively eschewed providentialism in its own ranks. May argued, in an influential 1964 essay, that "knowledge of religious history has become a necessity . . . for those interested in American intellectual history," noting further a "recovery of American religious history" that had "restored" knowledge of how most Americans thought "about human nature and destiny."[2] May's very words—"recovery" and "restored"—and their mere necessity even amid the Cold War revivals indicate how fragile theology was as a reputable historical topic at the time. Certainly, after Miller, May, and their many followers, the place of theology in the intellectual history of early America now seems quite secure; the reputation of most twentieth-century theology, on the other hand, benefited from no such generosity of spirit, and still owes more to the snide H. L. Mencken than to the scholarly Miller or May.

The Puritans, of course, struggled with sin, grace, signs, and wonders in a pre-Newtonian, pre-Darwinian world. Cotton Mather was an intellectual by any reasonable understanding of the term, as was Jonathan Edwards after him. But how should we study theology as intellectual history in the twentieth century, after its intellectual marginalization? If the grand meta-narrative of modern Western intellectual history has been that of the Enlightenment—a story that sees the intellectual advances of the last three centuries in science, history, and philosophy as coming at the expense of religion—then can theology still be a subject of respectable intellectual history? If so, how?

Scholars in recent years have worked through these questions along a variety of paths. Perhaps the most straightforward route has been to treat the accommodation of religion to intellectual modernity as itself the central drama, and therefore to foreground religious liberalism. "In the United States at this time," the literary critic Lionel Trilling famously wrote in 1950, "liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition."[3] With Keynesianism ascendant, Cold War exigencies marginalizing both left-wing radicalism and right-wing isolationism, and mainline Protestantism flourishing, Trilling's assessment of American thought at mid-century made good sense, whatever shortcomings we might recognize in hindsight. Scholars hoping to

[2] Henry F. May, "The Recovery of American Religious History," *American Historical Review* 70/1 (Oct. 1964), 79–92, at 79.

[3] Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York, 1950), ix.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244315000165 Published online by Cambridge University Press

capture the most vital currents in twentieth-century religious thought, from William Hutchison and Kenneth Cauthen a half-century ago to Gary Dorrien and David Hollinger today, therefore often follow Trilling's lead and study liberalism. Among political historians the study of liberal Protestantism certainly lost ground to evangelicalism during the heyday of the religious right; among historians attuned to theology, however, Protestant liberalism, especially its neoorthodox variant, has remained the more vital enterprise. In other words, despite the failure of academic liberal theology to gain much purchase in the pews—or perhaps precisely because of this failure—it retained the patina of intellectual respectability in the academy, even among those secular academics (the vast majority) who never read a word of it.

Conservative religious thought—evangelicalism in particular—presents a more difficult problem for secular intellectual historians.[4] Trilling dismissed, with characteristic sweep, American conservatism as failing to "express [it]self in ideas," noting only "some isolated and ecclesiastical exceptions."[5] Yet by "ecclesiastical exceptions" Trilling almost certainly meant Roman Catholicism rather than evangelicalism. The Catholic natural-law tradition, after all, afforded Catholics a robust intellectual tradition from which to draw, while American evangelicalism since Edwards, in the estimation of intellectuals like Trilling, did not produce thought that merited respect as "ideas." Ever since, evangelicals have struggled for intellectual legitimacy (often borrowing from Roman Catholics to bolster their bona fides) while intellectual historians have struggled with how to treat evangelical thought, popular and elite, both seriously and honestly.

* * *

Fortunately, recent scholarship offers important new approaches to these challenges. Molly Worthen astutely frames her analysis of evangelical thought in postwar America precisely around the dilemmas themselves, highlighting, in the words of her subtitle, evangelicalism's "crisis of authority." Which authorities were evangelicals bound to respect? And how might evangelical intellectuals gain recognition as public authorities themselves? The book that results from pursuing these questions wrestles most centrally with the legacy and impact of Reformed theology—the strand of Protestant thought, derived from theologian John Calvin, that has had the most robust and influential intellectual tradition—yet ranges widely across Wesleyan, Anabaptist, and Holiness traditions as well.

4 Paul Boyer's *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1992) was a notable exception, a work that took evangelical and fundamentalist ideas seriously as cultural and intellectual history.

5 Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, ix.

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Though limited almost exclusively to the labors of powerful white men, Worthen's lively and sophisticated book nevertheless presents the most nuanced and diverse account we have of modern evangelical intellectual life.

Much of the sophistication of Worthen's account stems from her careful attention to the divisions and rivalries within evangelicalism, in addition to those between evangelicalism and secular thought. She carefully acknowledges that while "evangelicalism is a far more thoughtful and diverse world" than most observers realize, it nevertheless "does host a potent strain of anti-intellectualism, a pattern of hostility and ambivalence toward the standards of tolerance, logic, and evidence by which most secular thinkers in the West have agreed to abide" (2). Here Worthen identifies a clash between intellectual "sovereign powers"—the norms of secular intellectual life and the claims of supernatural revelation. The propulsive energy of modern evangelicalism, she contends, arises from the grinding fault lines that run between these two tectonic forces. Given this dynamic, the intellectual history of evangelicalism "is peppered with compromises, sleights of hand, and defensive maneuvers, a combination of pragmatism and idealism that has made evangelicalism one of the most dynamic and powerful phenomena in Christian history, as well as a minefield for independent thought" (2).

In important ways Worthen's argument follows that first laid out by historian Richard Hofstadter, who identified the frothy brew of evangelicalism, pragmatism, and democratic egalitarianism as the primary ingredients of American anti-intellectualism. But Worthen does more than parrot Hofstadter. She significantly enhances his work, and makes a major contribution to American religious history, by taking seriously the intellectual labor of evangelicals as they grappled with their own internal contradictions and tensions. Her study in this way charts the rhythms of intellectual withdrawals and engagements, parries and thrusts, longing and revulsion within evangelical culture, each back-and-forth generative of new illuminations and obfuscations.

Worthen's narrative coheres around the stories of powerful thinkers and institutions as they labored to create an evangelical intellectual culture amid these cross-pressures. Men such as Carl Henry, Harold Ockenga, J. Gresham Machen, Francis Schaeffer, Cornelius van Til, John Howard Yoder, and Jim Wallis—all familiar to students of American evangelicalism—occupy center stage in Worthen's account, as do the institutions they built: Princeton, Westminster, and Fuller seminaries; Wheaton College; the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE); and *Christianity Today* magazine. Worthen's detailed biographical sketches of these key thinkers and institutions (and her sparkling prose) make this book a pleasure to read. If the book leans perhaps too heavily on well-known theologians and preachers, this is more than made up for by its expansive view of evangelicalism, incorporating Nazarene, Pentecostal, and especially Mennonite

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figures, such as Yoder, into the usual mix of Baptists and Presbyterians. What unites evangelicals, in the end, amid this welter of denominational and theological difference, is a shared set of concerns: "how to repair the fracture between spiritual and rational knowledge; how to assure salvation and a true relationship with God; and how to resolve the tension between the demands of personal belief and the constraints of a secularized public square" (4).

As this set of concerns indicates, Worthen's understanding of evangelicalism foregrounds ideas. Pride of place she gives to "worldview," a term and concept that evangelicals borrowed from the German *Weltanschauung* and wielded like a cudgel in their battles with secularists, modernists, and each other. Sometimes translated more precisely as "world and life view," the idea of worldview came to American evangelicalism by way of Reformed thinkers such as the Dutch politician Abraham Kuyper and the Scottish theologian James Orr, and took hold with particular force in the US after World War II. For these thinkers, the idea that one's intellectual and faith orientation stemmed from a coherent and comprehensive "worldview," grounded in first principles and core commitments, placed evangelical doctrine and secular reason on an even playing field. Each represented a conceptual universe from which notions of truth and standards of evidence and reason proceeded, while each remained fundamentally inscrutable to the other. In some ways the concept dates as far back as St Augustine's contention that faith must precede reason, as Worthen notes, and remained vital to Puritan thinkers in colonial New England, yet modern evangelicals deployed the idea more sharply and systematically than did any previous Christians, especially to critique the claims of liberal and secular academics to disinterested neutrality. "Modern scholars' claims that no theological perspective clouded their work," Worthen writes, "seemed to conservative Protestants to be a kind of insidious, idolatrous theology itself" (23).

The Dutch immigrant Cornelius van Til brought such ideas from Kuyper to the United States, first to Princeton Theological Seminary and later to Westminster Seminary, which he founded with Machen and others in response to Princeton's perceived liberalization. At Westminster Van Til and others built the notion of worldview into a worldview itself, an all-encompassing (and marvelously insulating) philosophical system he called "presuppositionalism." Van Til, notes Worthen, "denied the Enlightenment ideal of the pure, objective fact," arguing rather that "the human mind can comprehend reality only by proceeding from the truth of biblical revelation." For this reason, Van Til and other presuppositionalists concluded, "it is impossible, then, for Christians to reason with non-Christians" (30). Many aspects of twentieth-century evangelical intellectual culture, especially its tendency to develop parallel intellectual universes—colleges such as Wheaton, magazines such as *Christianity Today*—come into clear focus when seen through the presuppositionalist lens.

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Not all evangelical scholars, however, sought to hunker down in hermetically sealed intellectual safe houses, and Worthen marvelously teases out these competing evangelicalisms. Unlike Van Til, other evangelicals, especially those who adopted the label "neo-evangelical" after World War II, sought to use the tools of the Enlightenment against itself, in a kind of religious–intellectual judo. Figures such as Carl Henry and Harold Ockenga, the founder of the NAE, sought "the cannibalism of the Enlightenment by using the vocabulary of modern empiricism ... the language and structure of modern science, to compel the Enlightenment to devour itself" (77). Rather than eschew secular reason, this stripe of evangelical thinker sought to use the tools of science and history to bolster the truth-claims of Christianity. Van Til's colleague J. Gresham Machen, for example, claimed that theology was an empirical endeavor rooted in the same regimes of fact and reason as any secular intellectual endeavor. "We refuse ... to abandon to the student of natural science the entire realm of fact, in order to reserve to religion merely a realm of ideals," Worthen quotes him as writing. "On the contrary, theology, we hold, is just as much a science as is chemistry" (31–2). Though not likely to persuade scholars not already committed to evangelical belief, Machen's proclamations from the 1920s laid the foundation for significant developments in evangelical culture, from the apologetic enterprises of postwar neo-evangelicalism to the more contemporary alternative pseudo-science and history that Stephens and Giberson examine.

The doctrine of biblical inerrancy proved the greatest stumbling block for those evangelicals determined to claim intellectual authority through standard academic means. All conservative evangelicals, Worthen notes, proclaimed adherence to the doctrine of "inerrancy," but what this meant varied widely in practice, and revealed significant epistemological divides. Some thought inerrancy a doctrine that must be proved through scientific and historical methods—that every jot and tittle of the Bible must be defended by publicly accessible reason—while others recognized that inerrancy could be better squared with academic norms by adopting more capacious and flexible understandings of scriptural truth. While battles over creation and evolution garnered the most headlines, history, too, as a method of inquiry clashed with the most rigid inerrantist positions. "The basic principles of inerrancy," Worthen observes, "seeped into the way [evangelicals] interpreted history outside the Bible as well. They were less interested in understanding ancient thinkers in their own historical context" than in searching for timeless, unchanging truths (71). There are few better places to start if one wishes to understand the lack of respect for evangelical thought among intellectual historians than this application of biblical hermeneutics to history.

Worthen makes clear that the fundamental ambitions of evangelical theology in the twentieth century failed—failed to absorb, failed to convert, and even

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failed effectively to wall off secular thought. There were too many circles to square, as evangelicals' "craving for clear authority," in the end, always remained "second only to their refusal to let any authority boss them around" (257). Evangelical habits of mind, Worthen concludes, most especially the commitment to presuppositionalism, have "crippled evangelicals in their pursuit of what secular thinkers take to be the aims of intellectual life: the task of discovering new knowledge, creating original and provocative art, and puzzling out the path toward a more humane civilization" (261). Not only have evangelicals suffered from these missed opportunities, American public life has as well. Talk of a distinctive and irreconcilable "Christian worldview," Worthen contends ominously but persuasively, "curtails debate, justifies hardline politics, and discourages sympathetic voters from entertaining thoughts of moderation or compromise" (261). Surely, this is a world we all sadly recognize, and a convincing demonstration that Henry May's proclamation fifty years ago—that a "recovery of American religious history" is essential to understanding basic realities of our national public culture—is as true today as ever.

* * *

Stephens and Giberson know these stakes well, and track them in painful detail in *The Anointed*. Where Worthen illumines evangelical thought in its highest echelons, Stephens and Giberson highlight the consequences of presuppositionalism, inerrancy, and crises of authority for everyday folk. Their central argument, which seems indisputable, is that American evangelicalism built a "parallel culture" of alternative science, history, and social science in the postwar decades, rooted in an alternative class of experts with an alternative set of credentials. Though culture-war politics and the cynical manipulations of partisan operatives have certainly amplified the effects of this intellectual Balkanization, Stephens and Giberson claim that it can only be properly understood in theological terms. "Political accounts," they write, "cannot illuminate the reasons evangelicals" might deny global warming or oppose genetic testing, even though these issues "might not seem connected in any meaningful way to their faith" (7). To fathom such resistance to mainstream knowledge, one must track the intellectual and theological underpinnings of the evangelical Oz.

The Anointed seeks a broader audience than *Apostles of Reason*, and therefore eschews the detailed intellectual genealogies that Worthen provides of concepts like inerrancy and worldview. At the level of broad theology, what Stephens and Giberson contribute most significantly is an account of the concept of "anointing" and its relation to the social construction of expertise within evangelical subcultures. Anointing, they tell us, is the "process by which God

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sends his spirit in a special way to a person, empowering that person to speak and lead other Christians" (8). Anointed leaders become a cadre of alternative evangelical experts, authorities whose expertise is not derived from university training—as lay evangelicals often "view secular credentials with suspicion"—but rather from "fidelity to the Bible, inspirational preaching, [and] confident assertions of a special relationship to God" (10, 232). These anointed experts, write Stephens and Giberson, "have undermined the academic status quo in such a way that a multitude of lay Christians are comfortable standing up to the 'experts,' confident that there really are two sides" to matters such as global warming, evolution, or the religious history of the United States (5). The result, they argue, is that "populist and often woefully uninformed sentiments dominate" broad swaths of American evangelicalism (5).

Stephens and Giberson track these developments through a series of carefully researched and argued case studies, tackling evangelical approaches to science, history, and social science in turn. Usefully, they reach back to the nineteenth century for each of these studies, tracing both the development of the mainstream academic fields and the evangelical alternative. Creationism and its sibling, intelligent design, they demonstrate, stand on a body of alternative science dating back more than a century, yet the landmark text for postwar evangelicals was *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications*, a work co-authored by a Bible scholar and an engineer and published in 1961. This book "influenced evangelicals perhaps as much as any text on any topic in the second half of the twentieth century" (29), with its detailed claims that geology, hydrology, and anthropology, rightly understood, prove a young Earth and other aspects of a literal reading of Genesis. Yet, Stephens and Giberson acknowledge, "the popularity of creationism" in the end did not rest on its scientific validity, but rather on its "social argument, namely, that America's worrisome slide into immorality, liberalism, and unbelief, was caused by widespread acceptance of evolution" (35). Just as William Jennings Bryan had linked Darwinism to the slaughter of World War I—evolution, he claimed, degraded the sacredness of human persons by claiming they were not made in God's image—so too modern creationists contend that evolution undermines morality.

This moral, even apocalyptic, argument links the work of creationists like Ken Ham with evangelical historians like David Barton and evangelical psychologists like James Dobson. Each uses the arguments and evidence of the secular academy when it serves his purposes—selectively citing journal articles, books from university presses, or scholars with Ivy League credentials—but ultimately moral arguments trump academic reason. *The Light and the Glory*, from 1977, for example, chronicled America's Christian heritage, highlighting in particular our covenantal relationship with God. It sold in the millions, and its authors, Peter

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Marshall and David Manuel, used it as the basis for curricula in homeschool and Christian academy settings that influenced millions more. The covenant binding America and God afforded the nation divine protection as it grew into a world power, but all was imperiled as the nation began its moral decline in the 1960s. The psychologist, activist, and radio personality James Dobson used similar moral and apocalyptic arguments to advance his alternative theories of child rearing, marriage, and homosexuality.

Stephens and Giberson clearly intend these chapters to reach both academic and evangelical audiences—to help each understand the other—while condemning, ultimately and forcefully, the often shocking ignorance and gullibility of isolated and insular evangelicals. Yet the most useful aspect of their work, for intellectual historians, is their nuanced and sympathetic portrayal of life inside the evangelical bubble, of the institutional and interpersonal sociology that gives evangelical pseudo-intellectualism its plausibility. They present, as their central example, the case of Paul Miller, a man in his twenties who, they claim, "has never had a secular friend" despite living in greater Boston after growing up in the college town of Athens, Georgia. As he made his way through a thoroughly evangelical education, Miller was socialized into the ranks of evangelicals who "have their vision so shaped by [evangelicalism's] paradigms that the secular world rarely intrudes, except to be critiqued" (182). Miller's world was the world of Ham's creation science and Barton's American history, a world of coherent intellectual and moral arguments walled off from the output of American universities.

These two books offer the most important attempts to make sense of twentieth-century evangelical intellectual life, and demonstrate ways to describe and analyze forms of anti-intellectualism and pseudo-intellectualism with sophistication. They trace the genealogy and implications of evangelical thought through key figures, institutions, and concepts. Yet they clearly only scratch the surface of what a robust subfield in the intellectual history of modern American Protestant theology might look like. Most obviously, each of these books attends almost exclusively to white men. Certainly, a more diverse cast of characters would be desirable simply on grounds of greater inclusiveness. But even more significantly, attention to race and gender, not only as social facts but as realities constituted by discourses—including theological discourses—would greatly enhance our insight into the social, political, and cultural importance of modern religious thought—and the mechanisms by which it is made important.

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Historians Ed Blum and Paul Harvey adopt such an approach in *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America.* This work shines

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simply as a history of the racialization of Jesus in America, but very early on one realizes that the authors have larger ambitions for the book. In the introduction they write, "The stories here reveal how ... the sacred has been racialized and how the spiritualization of race has given human difference not only a life beyond scientific studies or anthropological insights but also a sense of eternal worth" (15). In other words, this book, like *The Anointed*, tracks a religious culture that both parallels and intersects with academic culture, convergences and divergences that have moral and political as well as intellectual consequences. Anthropologies of race; literary, historical, and archaeological investigations of the historical Jesus; and theologies of human difference and sacredness all converge in their study of the way Jesus has been embodied in the American religious imaginary.

The work opens with a useful debunking of various myths—such as the simple assumption that all groups create Jesus in their own image—but proceeds mostly as a chronology of visual depictions of Jesus, and their deployment in American racial and religious politics, from the earliest European settlement to the present. The authors carefully argue that racial hierarchies as a system of ideas had to be invented before racialized depictions of Jesus carried any significant theological weight. "Whiteness was not made sacred in the form of Jesus," they write of the British Protestants who settled North America, "because whiteness itself as marker of racial identity and power did not yet exist" (29). Soon enough, we know, it would, and white and black versions of Jesus, from Mormon to evangelical to black liberationist, would soon become familiar aspects of American racial and religious contestation.

As *The Color of Christ* clearly demonstrates through its careful attention to art, architecture, song, and literature, the history of religious ideas in the United States need not be confined to formal ideas or academic debates. In fact, a retreat from the realm of propositional ideas into the aesthetic and the affective was a powerful and enduring, if still inadequately examined, religious response to modernity. Fundamentalists and many conservative evangelicals sought to engage the challenges of science and history head-on, to be sure, through a rigorous cooptation and reimaging of academic norms; the politics of competing worldviews and presuppositions that Worthen and Stephens and Giberson delineate, and the selective appropriation by evangelicals of secular scholarship and its cultural authority, stem from such ambitions. But other Christians, liberal and conservative, turned away from disputations about paradigms and truth-claims and sought their religious fundamentals elsewhere. Yet despite this seeming evasion of rigorous thought, intellectual history has a role to play here too. We need sound intellectual genealogies, rooted in social, political, and economic contexts, that take not only propositional theology seriously, but also those kinds of implicit theology that foreground the irrational, the affective, and the experiential.

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This subjectivist strain is, again, perhaps easiest to track among religious liberals. It runs from the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and the American Ralph Waldo Emerson, down to William James and a host of twentieth-century figures. One clear example is Harry Emerson Fosdick's *As I See Religion* (1932), in which the most famous preacher in America tossed aside both formal theology and institutional religion and staked his claim to religious bedrock on mystical encounters with beauty and the sacredness of human personhood. He clearly understood the implications of his thought and the outrage it would spark from critics. He freely admitted the "vagueness of all this, its disembodied churchlessness and its intellectual vacuity," yet he found greater danger in the alternatives. "Rigid definitions of reality are insufficient," he asserted by way of rebuttal, and any "adequate thinking must have fringes ... Theological dogmatism has nearly been the death of religion, and only by outgrowing its strangling constrictions has religion managed to survive."[6] When faced with the choice between the vaguely mystical and the narrowly rational, Fosdick chose the mystical, the path blazed by his namesake, Ralph Waldo Emerson, a century earlier. Like Emerson, Fosdick proclaimed that personal experience rather than inherited certainty remained the higher spiritual calling.

Intellectual history must attend to the anti-theology theology of Fosdick and his spiritual ancestors, cousins, and descendants. Just as anti-intellectualism has been one of the great topics of American intellectual history for more than half a century, so too anti-theology theologies deserve careful scrutiny. We need to know more about the intellectual history of religious aesthetics, affect, and experience—in liberal Protestantism, in post-Protestant spirituality, and perhaps most urgently in evangelicalism. Molly Worthen's work provides a good place to start. Though mostly concerned with Reformed rationalism, her broad-minded approach to evangelicalism encompasses Wesleyan and Anabaptist evangelicals with such romantic leanings. Secular scholarship, she writes of these evangelicals, was not such a threat when revelation was understood "not in terms of scripture's fixed, scientific meaning, but as epiphany that occurred at the intersection of text, tradition, experience, and human reason" (40).

Evangelicalism is the strange offspring of Pietism and the Enlightenment, Worthen reminds us, a genetic heritage that blends heart and head in varying measure. The story of evangelicalism in this way "is inseparable from the larger narrative of Western intellectual history," a narrative in which reason, faith, ideas, and emotion are never far apart (7). Evangelical historians such as Mark Noll, in *America's God* (2002), and George Marsden, in *Fundamentalism and American*

6 Harry Emerson Fosdick, *As I See Religion* (New York, 1932), 150–51.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244315000165 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Culture (2006; first published 1980), have tracked the long coexistence of religious rationalism, rooted in Baconian science and Scottish Common Sense philosophy, with revivalistic pietism in evangelical culture. If nothing else, Stephens and Giberson in *The Anointed*, and Worthen in *Apostles of Reason*, chronicle the heroic efforts and ultimate failure of mainstream evangelicalism to maintain this symbiosis into the twentieth century. While revivalism flourished under the leadership of Billy Graham and host of other media-savvy, charismatic, and spirit-filled preachers, the evangelical mind in this secular age strayed down the dark alley of presuppositions and worldviews, cut off from the sunlight and fresh air of modern thought.

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