

BOOK REVIEWS

D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism: True Religion in a Modern World*. New York: Oxford UP, 2018. Pp. 354. \$34.95.

This is a remarkable book. One is impressed by the breadth of figures discussed, the depth of analysis, and skill in integrating it all into a clear and readable account. But more than this, Hindmarsh takes us into new territory, giving us a far richer understanding of evangelical spirituality than we have had before.

Hindmarsh argues that the core question for eighteenth-century evangelicals was “Is it possible for women and men to experience the presence of God in the modern world?” (ix). By “modern world” he means the world of the Enlightenment and Newtonian science, a world increasingly focused on nature and tending to seal spiritual realities “off in another sphere altogether from material realities” (5).

To see how early evangelicals answered this question, Hindmarsh examines evangelical devotion as it interacts with culture and ideas. He argues “that evangelicalism is best understood as a distinctive form of traditional Christian spirituality that emerged in the eighteenth century highly responsive to the conditions of the modern world” (276). Indeed, “evangelical religion emerged as a potent and disruptive force in that Anglo-American society” (3). The key figures for this study are George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards and John and Charles Wesley. In addition to these, Hindmarsh draws upon many more, both clergy and lay, giving his account both diversity and depth.

The book begins with an examination of the conversion of George Whitefield as a case study in evangelical devotion, followed by three pairs of chapters dealing with the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, responses to the new science, and the role of law in evangelical spirituality. Chapter 8 compares the Calvinist/Arminian debates to those within the world of art in a surprisingly illuminating way. The conclusion brings all these strands together.

In the chapter on Whitefield, Hindmarsh examines the role of the spiritual disciplines of Oxford Methodism, fearlessness of Pietism, and biblical piety of Puritanism in shaping his spirituality. But above all, “it was the immediate sense of the Holy Spirit . . . that drew these influences together to light a fire and inspire an ardour of evangelical devotion in Whitefield. . .” as it did for many others (34). It was a passive and receptive spirituality that at the same time ignited an activist spirituality, moving him into public ministry.

Chapters 2 and 3 place evangelical spirituality in the center of the tension

between ancients and moderns. While the message of an immediate work of the Spirit was itself not unique, the religious awakening was unprecedented as a social movement not constrained by parish or denomination, consisting of a connection of religious societies and groups, and being ecumenical and international scope. Yet at the same time it was rooted in the classical spirituality of figures like Scougal and à Kempis, whose writings were simplified, popularized and made available to a mass audience.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe evangelical responses to the new science. In general, evangelicals embraced the new discoveries, utilizing them to meet human need (as in John Wesley's medical advice in *Primitive Physick*) and even more as grounds for doxology in praise of the Creator, but they rejected any dualism that would separate God from creation. Instead the Wesleys and Edwards insisted that in conversion the Spirit gives spiritual senses that enable us to see the presence of God in and through all things thus "re-enchanting the Newtonian universe from top to bottom" (127).

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the vital role of the law in evangelical spirituality. Hindmarsh begins by examining evangelical preaching in a time of both rule of law and harsh criminal penalties. The gallows and the courts were the backdrop of much of that preaching; the "plight of the condemned prisoner" is "the situation of us all as sinners" before God's law. But the law was not only a terror but a beautiful picture of righteousness, and through the divine grace it can be written upon hearts.

Chapter 8 examines the Calvinist and Arminian dispute over how that grace works. Drawing on an analogy with artistic disputes in the Royal Academy, Hindmarsh describes Calvinist spirituality as focused on the sublime, and Wesleyan on struggle. For Calvinists, in conversion we are overwhelmed by the vastness of God's love and sovereign power; our central aspiration is to contemplate God in Jesus Christ. As a result, we are morally transformed. For Wesleyans, "as a response to divine grace," spirituality was a matter of striving in the pilgrimage toward promised sanctification. Hindmarsh sees in these two spiritualities "a tension between the mystical and the ascetic, the aesthetic and the ethical," (266), an important tension for evangelicals to maintain. This was for me one of the most significant insights in a book filled with insights.

Hindmarsh has provided us with fascinating and unprecedented portrait of the emergence of evangelical spirituality. I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

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John Coffey, ed., *Heart Religion: Evangelical Piety in England and Ireland, 1690–1850*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016. Pp. 320. \$105.00.

Heart Religion is a collection of essays edited by John Coffey, Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Leicester, and drawn from the seventh annual one-day conference of the Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, held in 2011. It stands alongside six parallel volumes from previous events sponsored jointly with the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary University of London between 2004 and 2015. Methodist readers will immediately recognize the names of two contributors, in particular, who have helped expand and revise the study of the Wesleyan heritage, David W. Bebbington of Cambridge, and Phyllis Mack, Professor Emeritus of Rutgers University. Suffice it to say that the contributors represent a trans-Atlantic community of scholars who brought considerable cumulative wisdom to bear upon this large topic.

In his magisterial introduction to the volume, Coffey explores the sources and trajectories of evangelical piety. This essay, in itself, is worth the expense of the book. He explores the emerging and successive waves of Protestant heart religion during the period between 1690 and 1850 with close attention to the most recent scholarship and seminal influences with regard to the "language of the heart." Specifically, in terms of Methodist developments, he demonstrates how John Wesley set his own version of heart religion in opposition to formal, intellectualized, and legalistic religion, insisting on the need of an internalized experience of the Holy Spirit that both regenerates and liberates (9).

A number of influences (most of them expected and well-rehearsed) coalesced to reinforce the power of inward heart religion: Puritan literature, high church Anglican sources (William Law, in particular, with regard to the Oxford Methodists), Roman Catholic devotional writers, and Continental Pietism (especially focusing on Boehm and Horneck as connecting links between the early Pietists and the later Wesleyan revival). But several essays in this volume also elevate the Enlightenment and changing attitudes in the wider culture as of equal importance in the elevation of interior religion, echoing the thesis of Bebbington who sees "evangelicalism" as a movement embedded in these wider currents of change. This volume also seeks to interface these diverse sources with the divergent trajectories of this movement. "The two are connected," writes the editor, "for once we appreciate the various tributaries feeding into the Evangelical Revival, it becomes easier to understand its pluralism (23)." These essays contribute to a more dynamic understanding of the relationship, then, between confessional traditions/orthodoxy and Pietism/Methodism and elevate the role of women in these discoveries about inward religion. Chapters that examine these developments through the lens of lyrical theology (the hymns of these movements) add texture to the discussion and also provide a window into heart religion through what might be called the preferred medium of the common person.

While wide-ranging in scope, the nine essays of this volume all illu-

minate British and Irish heart religion, then, through various lenses, all of which help to bring relevant concerns and issues into clearer focus. Whether viewed through the lens of dissenting communion hymns (ch. 1) or the lyrical works of John Cennick (ch. 5); the lens of personal conversion (ch. 8), dreams and emotions (ch. 7), or problems among the reformers (ch. 6); the lens of Continental spirituality (ch. 2), or the life and work of Anthony William Boehm (ch. 3) or George Whitefield (ch. 4); or the lens of deathbed piety (chapter 9), a new vision of evangelical piety emerges from this volume—more complex, more fully textured, more dynamic—that both stimulates the mind and moves the heart.

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