

Heaven on earth. Reimagining time and eternity in nineteenth-century British Evangelicalism.

By Martin Spence (foreword David W. Bebbington). Pp. xv + 307. Eugene, OR:

Pickwick Publications, 2015. \$36 (paper). 978 1 62032 259 8

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The author describes his book, which began life as an Oxford D.Phil. dissertation, as primarily a work of religious history but also one which speaks to those currents in contemporary Evangelicalism that emphasise the new creation, the priority of social justice and a broader view of salvation than that traditionally allowed by some Evangelical teaching. His conclusions will challenge views still frequently encountered in both constituencies. He has steeped himself in contemporary literature and steers the reader through complex bodies of thought. This body of writing, he insists, is to be taken seriously. Evangelical thought was not static in mid-century but responded to the extraordinary dynamism of the time by elaborating a doctrine of 'premillennialism'. What that amounted to is the chief preoccupation of the book. Historians, it is argued, have failed to understand the difference between 'historicists' and 'dispensationalists' in their comments on premillennialism, not that many of them have exercised their minds on this point. Naturally, 'reimagining' time and eternity was not a straightforward matter. Spence takes us through the thought of many writers, all struggling to reach similar though not necessarily the same conclusions. Eternal life was not the same as everlasting life. Faith in God was not simply for a better life in the future but it involved a fresh perspective on the present. This careful presentation and analysis of these writings sets them too in a 'Romantic' context and in a time when the pioneering greatness of Britain seemed indisputable. The premillennialist project is seen above all as a brief and intriguing coalescence of the old and the new: a pre-critical prophetic framework generating a liberalising theological and social agenda. Spence has made his case that the writers with whom he is concerned shared with diverse contemporaries a surprising amount of common ground.

PERSHORE

KEITH ROBBINS

Religious publishing and print culture in modern China, 1800–2012. Edited by Philip

Clart and Gregory Adam Scott. (Religion and Society, 58.) Pp. v + 349 incl.

24 figs and 7 tables. Boston–Berlin–Munich: de Gruyter, 2015. €99.95. 978

1 61451 499 2

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When the first Protestant missionaries arrived in China in the early decades of the nineteenth century, they immediately embarked on the production of Chinese Christian texts. Initially they relied on xylography (woodblock printing), following the centuries-old print culture in China. This was, however, a laborious and expensive process. Thus, they strove to overcome the technical challenges of adapting new print technologies, especially mechanical movable-type and lithography, in the production of both religious and secular Chinese-language publications. In their persuasive introduction, the editors point out that the contributions in the volume under review help to 'unearth the deep connections between the development of print cultures in the modern era and changes in many aspects of religious culture' (p. 4).

Two of the seven chapters deal with the production of Chinese Protestant literature. The first piece focuses on the distribution by the British and Foreign Bible Society of Chinese versions of the Holy Scriptures, paying particular attention to the essential roles of Chinese colporteurs and Bible women in the introduction and dissemination of the Christian message. The stimulating second chapter dealing with Christian print culture in China provides an excellent example of how radical, Evangelical groups – in this case the Seventh-Day Adventists – used the modern print media as an indispensable means of propagating their distinct doctrines (Sabbath-keeping, the Second Coming of Christ, biblical prophecies, as well as health reform) in the increasingly diversified Protestant missionary enterprise around the turn of the twentieth century. The authors conclude with a discussion of how Chinese Adventists continued to print religious material, including prophetic and theological literature, even in the hostile environment of Communist China. The remaining five chapters are devoted to the ways in which modern Chinese religious movements, including Buddhist and Daoist groups, as well as ‘redemptive societies’ (voluntary associations emphasising, among other things, proper moral conduct and engagement in philanthropic activities) shaped the modern Chinese religious print culture. It is noted that the new religious publishing houses and ‘sectarian’ bookshops distributing (illustrated) morality books, *baojuan* (‘precious scrolls’, i.e. popular religious scriptures) and classical Buddhist liturgical texts were modelled on Christian enterprises in China. Indeed, several independent Chinese entrepreneurs employing new print technologies had been apprenticed in Protestant mission presses. These essays, including the two chapters on Chinese Christianity, focus on a hitherto neglected aspect of modern Chinese print culture, namely its transformative impact on religious thought and practice. Moreover, as these essays show so clearly, religion continues to flourish in China’s modernity, various secularisation processes notwithstanding.

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Religion, race and the making of Confederate Kentucky, 1830–1880. By Luke E. Harlow. (Cambridge Studies on the American South.) Pp. xiv + 242 incl. frontispiece.

Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. £60. 978 1 107 00089 6

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Kentucky has long intrigued students of America’s sectional crisis and Civil War. A slave state that chose to remain in the Union, Kentucky straddled the divides that characterised the antebellum United States: North/South, free/slave, unionist/secessionist. Luke Harlow’s fine book joins a growing literature that examines Kentucky’s movement from that ‘middle ground’ before and during the Civil War to full membership in the postwar ‘solid South’. Harlow contributes to that literature by arguing that religion proved central to ‘the making of Confederate Kentucky’. He persuasively claims that Kentucky’s ‘antebellum religious past [is] the key to unlocking its postwar future’ (p. 223). Although antebellum and wartime white Kentuckians differed regarding the wisdom of slavery and