

issue was the viability of natural theology with or without the support of biblical revelation. Protestant theologians charged the Cartesians with impiety, because they separated natural philosophy from theology, explaining natural events by purely natural or mechanical causes, making no mention of divine creation and providence, and hence giving God no glory. The Cartesians defended this practice by appealing to the integrity of natural philosophy in its separateness, a principle of separation that has its roots in Bacon, although this is not acknowledged by Douglas. Spinoza responded by reconnecting theology and natural philosophy, and by providing a historical critical interpretation of the Bible that limits biblical revelation to its particular political theological context, and by replacing biblical authority with the political principle of the liberty of philosophising. Douglas's thesis concerning Spinoza's context is eminently plausible, and it fits the radical and subversive intent of Spinoza's philosophical programme and its comprehensive scope. However, he fails to make the case. Whilst his exposition of the Cartesian and Protestant background is on the whole adequate and useful, his interpretation of Spinoza is not. His exposition of Spinoza, especially of his metaphysics, is brief and inadequate, and most likely will only confuse novices and perplex more experienced scholars. He fails to explain how Spinoza recast the Cartesian notion of substance and made it the central idea of an *a priori* naturalistic monism. Indeed, he seems to have no clue to the essential character of Spinoza's metaphysical system. He also seems not to comprehend certain logical concepts on which his exposition depends: viz. the distinction between valid and sound argument, and the nature of circularity.

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*Enlightening enthusiasm. Prophecy and religious experience in early eighteenth-century England.* By Lionel Laborie. Pp. xii + 353 incl. 6 ills. and 3 tables. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. £80. 978 0 7190 8988 6  
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It is now *de rigueur* to prick the Enlightenment's pretensions to 'reason' by demonstrating that the eighteenth-century was replete with mystics, millenarians and miracle workers. Alchemy, the Kabbalah and Behmenism stalk the new Enlightenment. Laborie's fine monograph pushes at an open door, yet brings into the room a rich exploration of the 'French Prophets'. This was a group of refugees from the hideous brutalities of the Camisard revolt in the Languedoc who arrived in London in 1706, quickly gathered several hundred followers, and captured public imagination. A prosecution for blasphemy and a failed bodily resurrection later, the movement subsided, though a devoted core persisted and today find descendants among the American Shakers. Laborie is generous in his debts to the important study by Hillel Schwartz thirty-five years ago, but he takes the subject in fresh direction. Humbling in his archival tenacity (embracing Halle, Paris, Geneva, Chester, Glasgow), his new finds include notes on the backs of playing cards, cited thus: 4♠. Sure-footed in his presentation, he handles panoramas and vignettes assuredly, and glides between Cevennois

topography and patristic theology. Resourceful in his methodological catholicity, he approaches the Prophets, and 'enthusiasm', via prosopography, lexicography, theology, psychology and pathology. Thus, one chapter explores ecstatic spirituality, from thaumaturgy through glossolalia to apokatastasis; another, the hawering of governments about whether to prosecute; a third, the development of psychological understandings of melancholy. Laborie is anxious to puncture a peculiarly English historiographical tradition that seeks to find a plebeian 'underground', a 'radical' tradition of religious dissent, from the Lollards through the Ranters and onward. The Prophets were not dissenters, but Christian universalists who drew support from Anglicans and Dissenters alike. And they were not low born, but socially diverse, and included such respectable adherents as the wealthy Fellow of the Royal Society Sir Richard Bulkeley and the mathematician and friend of Newton and Locke, Nicolas Fatio de Duillier. The Prophets caused a traffic jam of luxury coaches in Soho. They were a 'contagious social disease' exactly because they were fashionable: theirs was a sickness of modern, polite society. Connectedly, Laborie detaches 'enthusiasm' from its usual placement amid the fearful party political and anti-Dissenting reaction against Civil War fanaticism. Instead, he explores, not reactions tied to the politics of Civil War memory, but, rather, new registers of response to ecstatic religion. He explores Augustan stage satire against 'imposture' and credulity, and, among the physicians and natural philosophers, the gradual medicalisation of psychosomatic phenomena. Religious hysteria was handed from the heresiarch to the physician.

The book is absorbing, lucid, scholarly, and an essential read for students of both the Anglophone 'Enlightenment' and English religious history. In many ways it is a model monograph. I have some reservations. The evidential basis of the prosopographical analysis is not fully explained. As Laborie notes, a number of influential people turned up just to observe the mystics. It is not clear which of these, and why, end up in the appendix among the 665 identified followers. Bishop Edward Fowler is a critic in the text but appears in the appendix. Robert Harley considers prosecuting the Prophets in the text, but his devoted brother Edward appears in the appendix as a member. The Quaker *savant* Benjamin Furlong is said to have become an 'unconditional supporter' and recent scholars are reproached for ignoring this; yet no substance is given to the allegation of membership. (Sadly, the appendix lacks pagination so that index entries to it are nugatory.) The book's overall interpretative strategy seems to slide somewhat unsteadily between positing the mystics as a phenomenon *against* Enlightenment (causing us to doubt the ubiquity of Enlightenment 'rationalism') and as a phenomenon which was in part *constitutive* of Enlightenment (causing us to doubt Enlightenment rationalism *per se*). The former position is merely a warning that most people remained Christian believers in the supernatural in the eighteenth century; while the latter is more epistemically ambitious in debunking the classical concept of Enlightenment. On some pages Fellows of the Royal Society and the College of Physicians queue up to embrace the Prophets; on other pages they fall over themselves to theorise religious insanity. We teeter between spiritual catharsis as a form of holistic medicine and religious madness as a case for phlebotomy. On one page the Prophets 'challenged the laws of physics'; on another 'Enlightenment and enthusiasm ... went hand in hand'. Thus we are caught

between parousia and sickness. Yet Laborie's methodological promiscuity is, in the end, and quite properly, appealing. We are left in an epistemically unstable domain in which, at one moment, we are asked to take ecstasy seriously as a form of intense spiritual encounter with the divine, deeply embedded in the Christian tradition; while at another the Prophets accelerate the emergence of a secular understanding of melancholia and hysteria.

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*A time of sifting. Mystical marriage and the crisis of Moravian piety in the eighteenth century.*

By Paul Peucker. (Pietist, Moravian and Anabaptist Studies.) Pp. xv + 248 incl. 10 ills. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015. \$84.95. 978 0 271 06643 1

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In the late 1740s the Moravian Church underwent a profound crisis, viewed afterwards as a sifting by Satan (cf. Luke xxii.31). In February 1749 Count Zinzendorf issued a letter of reprimand and removed his twenty-year-old son Christian Rénatus from effective leadership of the Moravians' model community, Herrnhag. The crisis proved to be a turning point, its ultimate consequence – after Zinzendorf's death – abandonment of his distinctive theology and spirituality and reinvention of Moravianism as part of mainstream Protestantism, distinguished by little more than distinctive liturgical customs and an emphasis on community life. But Zinzendorf and his contemporaries were deliberately vague as to the Sifting's content, and his successors purged the otherwise voluminous Moravian archives of most of the evidence for what precisely occurred. Nineteenth-century Moravians extended the 'Sifting Time' to cover most of the 1740s and anything that now seemed unusual or unorthodox. German Moravians sought to protect Zinzendorf's memory by separating him from his own theology, British and American Moravians to separate him from an invented 'true' Moravianism. Though scholars have increasingly pointed to the falsity or inadequacy of previous interpretations, the riddle has remained: what happened and why, and how should it be interpreted? Paul Peucker answers those questions as definitively as the sources will allow. The Sifting was not a period, but a moment when erotic bridal mysticism culminated in some losing sight of the distinction between earth and heaven. They believed that they experienced union with Christ, rendering holy communion and studying Scripture unnecessary. Metaphors of union with the Bridegroom, such as kissing and embracing, were acted out between men and by men with women. On 6 December 1748 Christian Rénatus declared the single brethren to be sisters (brides of Christ) and absolved from future sins. Peucker presents isolated but compelling evidence for religiously-motivated extra-marital sexual activity between men and women. It was this that prompted Zinzendorf's intervention. Homo-erotic description of the union between single brethren and Christ, and of its celebration between single brethren, makes homosexual activity also likely: isolated comments suggest that it occurred, but this remains unproven. Much that has hitherto been regarded as part of the Sifting Time was not. During