

*Under the big top. Big tent revivalism and American culture, 1885–1925.* By Josh McMullen. Pp. xi + 229 incl. 7 figs. New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. £47.99. 978 0 19 939786 0  
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Protestant revivalists and evangelists in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America navigated between a declining Victorian culture on the one hand and an emerging modern consumerism on the other. Historians have typically understood these itinerants as unsophisticated defenders of a rural, populist traditionalism who railed against urban decadence and the forces undermining the Christian culture that had made America great and good. Josh McMullen instead finds astute preachers worried about the transformation underway yet eager to accommodate the ‘saw dust trail’ to muscular Christianity, the message of therapeutic wellbeing, modern media and mass marketing, and the cult of celebrity that animated consumer culture. Rather than simply nostalgic for a dying world, crusaders such as Billy Sunday, ‘Gipsy’ Smith, and Aimee Semple-McPherson ‘helped in the construction of a new consumer culture’ by packing the old vocabulary of sin, redemption and morality in the new idiom of entertainment and merchandising. If the medium is the message, in Marshall McLuhan’s famous epigram, then the implications of McMullen’s thesis run deep and far. Despite the revivalists’ intentions, the old-time religion may not have survived their concessions to cultural modernity. Their strategy helps to explain why they often made common cause with such liberals as Lyman Abbott and John D. Rockefeller. McMullen steps out of the Fundamentalist-Modernist interpretive framework to make big-tent revivalists unfamiliar once again to students of American Protestantism who thought that they knew all that they needed to know about them. While remaining uncertain about consumerism’s excesses, these savvy promoters helped to create the odd mix of old-time religion and material abundance that permeates the American gospel. As promised, McMullen’s book ‘helps us understand the continued appeal of both the therapeutic and salvific worldviews to many Americans as well as the ambivalence that attends this combination’. Pietism and publicity made for a powerful cultural force of enduring significance in American life.

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*Nothing but love in God’s water, I: Black sacred music from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement.* By Robert Darden. Pp. xiv + 114 incl. 7 ills. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014. \$34.95. 978 0 271 05084 3  
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African-American music and its revolutionary potential, whether in the form of slave spirituals or the protest songs of the Civil Rights Movement, is relatively well-trodden ground amongst scholars. Where Robert Darden diverts from, and adds to this historiography, is in highlighting the reach and impact of black musical forms within sections of white American society. Charting the progression of black sacred music from slavery up until the end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Darden argues that African-American religious songs were imbued with

a spirit of protest as soon as musical traditions that survived the transatlantic crossing were merged with Christianity. The introduction of Christianity made slaves aware of the sinfulness of the institution, giving them a position of moral authority over the slaveholder. Merging this belief with African musical traditions created protest songs that could safely be sung within earshot of slaveholders and overseers, but, through the use of biblical figures such as Moses and Daniel, incorporated a revolutionary ideology focusing on the belief in eventual freedom. The idea of slave spirituals containing multiple layers of meaning has been argued persistently by historians, and Darden's analysis does not really offer anything new here. Where his analysis does enter into more uncharted territory is the influence of African American sacred music on sections of white American society after the conclusion of the Civil War and into the twentieth century. Blacks migrating to Northern urban areas took these sacred protest songs with them, where they were cultivated by other groups looking to fight against oppressive measures, most notably organised labour. Using singing as a recruiting tool, many of their songs were based on spirituals. Black migrants also encountered other musical styles on moving North, and merged the spirituals with them, creating new sacred forms, such as jubilee, and also new secular forms, such as blues and jazz. The development of gospel in the 1930s saw sacred African-American music adopt a style closer to popular music of the period and, boosted by the influence of radio, it started to appeal to white teenagers. The portable transistor radio, and later the 45 record, enabled teenagers to listen to their music at their own time and place of choosing. The appeal of black music to sections of white American society assisted the impact of the songs when they began to be incorporated into the emerging Civil Rights Movement. Here the book ends a little abruptly with the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, with the remainder of the history to be incorporated, presumably, into the second volume. Despite this, Darden presents a compelling study of the impact of African-American music, making excellent use of both the rich historiography, and the various black musical genres.

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*Adolf Keller. Ecumenist, world citizen, philanthropist.* By Marianne Jehle-Wildberger (trans. Mark Kyburz with John Peck). Pp. x + 290 incl. frontispiece and 24 ills. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013. £22.50 (paper). 978 0 7188 9315 6  
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Marianne Jehle-Wildberger's authoritative biography of Adolf Keller appeared in Germany in 2008 and did much to demonstrate the significance of a man whose contribution to international ecumenism in the first half of the twentieth century was widely acknowledged in his own lifetime and almost abruptly forgotten afterwards. At least some of this unseemly neglect was due to the unfolding character of the movements to which he dedicated his efforts: busy in the present and intent on the past they seldom had time for more than a backwards glance to their founding fathers and mothers, and perhaps they resented the long shadow which they cast. But it is also a problem of historiography, for the rich, boldly creative labours of figures like Keller have slipped all too quickly through the hands of