

nineteenth century; and the most troubling had to do with the question whether the Apostles' Creed represented a sacrosanct text or a historical document. The implications of the debates reached deep into matters of doctrine, liturgy and ecclesiastical constitution. Julia Winnebeck's dissertation draws on exhaustive research in the archives and contemporary sources to analyse these controversies. To Protestant liberals, the intellectual heirs of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Ferdinand Christian Baur, the Apostles' Creed could be objected to on several counts. It entailed dogmatic propositions whose historical authenticity (to say nothing of their plausibility) could not be demonstrated. Particularly problematic was the doctrine of Jesus' miraculous birth: 'conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary'. Critics objected further to the Creed's central place in the liturgy, particularly the requirement, which prevailed in most of the Prussian and other German Protestant Churches, that it be recited at baptism, confirmation and ordination, as well as in Sunday services, and that it be understood as the word of God. The defenders of the Apostles' Creed, the conservative Protestants who were in the majority in the consistories as well as the synods, resisted both the historical attack on dogma and calls to allow clergymen to eliminate, modify or interpret recitation of the Creed in the light of their own doctrinal convictions. The Creed represented, its defenders argued, the foundational formulation of Christian belief, a common dogmatic bond without which the Church could not exist. In this way, the issue of the Apostles' Creed became, as Winnebeck notes, a 'red flag in the disputes among the parties' (p. 244) into which German Protestantism had split. The disputes played out in parishes, synods, ecclesiastical offices, before special tribunals and in the press. The stakes were high, for the moral as well as the institutional integrity of the Church seemed to be at stake. A number of cases led to the censure or dismissal of critics from clerical office. Julia Winnebeck's dissertation lays out in rich detail the many issues that attended the controversy over the Apostles' Creed. Her work is a welcome addition to scholarship on the theology and politics of German Protestantism in the nineteenth century.

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Mission, science and race in South Africa. A. W. Roberts of Lovedale, 1883–1938. By Keith Snedegar. Pp. xii + 189 incl. 10 ills. Lanham, MD–London: Lexington Books, 2015. £52.95. 978 0 7391 9624 3
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Most books on the history of mission education in South Africa mention Alexander William Roberts only in passing or in a footnote. Keith Snedegar, Professor of World History at Utah Valley University, has taken the trouble to study the rich material contained in Roberts's papers besides that in an impressive number of other collections, and to reconstruct his life's story. The reader is confronted with a life of many contradictions, rich in success and failure. Roberts was born in 1857 in Scotland and migrated as a young man in 1883 to Lovedale College in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa. Lovedale was a school run by the Free Church Mission of Scotland and during Roberts's career as a teacher

thousands of young Africans became his students, some of whom became prominent intellectuals like D. D. T. Jabavu and Z. K. Matthews. Although a committed teacher Roberts led a double life. During the nights he observed phenomena in the southern sky which made him a well-known figure in international astronomy. As he approached the end of his teaching career he also retired from astronomy and began a second career as a politician. When he joined the South African Senate, the Native Affairs Commission and other institutions the basic weakness of the old-fashioned liberalism which he represented quickly became apparent. He proved to be something of a turncoat and supported segregationist policies although he privately rejected them. This damaged his prestige among Africans who regarded him as a political failure. Snedegar does not hide his critical attitude and provides a portrait that shows Roberts's weaknesses and limitations. His study is a welcome addition to the complex history of South Africa liberalism, but at least as much a contribution to the history of education and the historiography of knowledge and science.

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Village atheists. How America's unbelievers made their way in a godly nation. By Leigh Eric Schmidt. Pp. xxii + 337 incl. 60 figs. Princeton-Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2016. £24.95. 978 06 9116864 7
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The symbiotic relationship between American religiosity and secularity is on full display in Leigh Schmidt's second historical monograph on late nineteenth-century free thought, the era of the atheist savant Robert Ingersoll and the moral crusader Anthony Comstock. Although theism, particularly a belief in the God of socially respectable Protestants, ultimately remained a cornerstone of American civic life, the decades following the Civil War witnessed a 'rough-edged' resistance spearheaded by the 'agnostics, infidels, and freethinkers' inhabiting *Truth Seeker* magazine and the National Liberal League. Schmidt, a public historian of American religion based at the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics in St Louis, presents four chapter-length profiles of 'flesh and blood freethinkers' who offer a 'quotidian', 'grassroots' corrective to an historiography overly enamoured with Ingersoll and ideas. This lived irreligion approach, based primarily upon lay periodicals and popular literature published between 1860 and 1890, challenges neat narratives of linear progress. As portrayed, Schmidt's subjects embodied the 'relational interdependence and volatility' (p. 20) that have marked the ongoing battle between secularisation and Christianisation.

Schmidt begins with Samuel Putnam, whose 1891 autobiography, *My religious experience*, chronicled his winding journey as a self-described 'secular pilgrim' away from the austere, New England Calvinism of his youth. The anti-Bunyan, Putnam's progress to unbelief began through his university reading of romantic and transcendentalist literature, which inclined him to affect over intellect. A sentimental vision of Jesus on a Civil War battlefield restored the young man's Christian commitment – but, this time, to the loving, liberal-Protestant God of