

the rapid expansion of higher education, the enhanced role of government, and the decline of mainline Protestantism. In this view, JFK's presidency coincided with the larger religious restructuring but did not cause or significantly influence it. Nonetheless, Lacroix's book is a valuable contribution to the literature on religion and politics. By moving the discussion away from Kennedy's personal religious views to how his administration engaged religious groups and viewpoints, he has advanced the discussion. His book illustrates that despite the enormous literature on the Kennedy presidency, there is much still to discover and debate.

Wilson D. Miscamble
University of Notre Dame
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***To Think Christianly: A History of L'Abri, Regent College, and the Christian Study Center Movement.* By Charles E. Cotherman.**
Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2020. xviii + 301 pp. \$35.00 paper.

What is a book on Christian study centers doing in a journal like *Church History*? Why should scholars of American religion care about this seemingly obscure corner of campus religion? A hint at an answer can be found in the subtitle to Charles Cotherman's book, which mentions L'Abri, the Swiss headquarters of Francis Schaeffer, a godfather of the religious right, whose books sold over three million copies between 1968 and 1990. The rest of the answer can be found in Cotherman's comprehensive and deeply researched book, which brings the receipts for those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Cotherman's study is an important chapter in the larger story of student religious life, a sector of American religion that often flies under the radar. At key moments in American religious history, student religious organizations have provided the organizational technologies (to borrow a term from the educational historian Lawrence Cremin) for movements that matter.

Without the international student networks of the collegiate YMCA, Howard Thurman and Benjamin E. Mays would not have visited Gandhi's India. Without the Methodist *motive* magazine, a generation of mainline Protestant women might not have encountered feminist approaches to Christianity, including Hillary Rodham Clinton, who kept every issue.

Like the 1930s YMCA and the postwar *motive*, the first Christian study centers were shaped by twentieth-century ecumenical liberal Protestantism. As Cotherman notes early in the book, one of the earliest examples was the Christian Faith-and-Life Community at the University of Texas at Austin. An expression of progressive Christianity, this Texas experiment kept Austin religion weird, hosting the 1961 wedding of future Students for a Democratic Society leaders Tom and Casey Hayden. During the heyday of the campus ecumenical movement, similar centers were founded at Brown, Duke, and the University of Wisconsin.

A hybrid of the campus ministry, the retreat center, and the seminar, a Christian study center combines spiritual, intellectual, and artistic pursuits, often in a brick-and-mortar home. Many, but not all, are located next to college campuses. At

least two have evolved into institutions of higher learning. Like many organizational forms birthed in mainline Protestantism, the model of the Christian study center was later adopted by campus evangelicalism, as well as Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox leaders. Currently, over thirty member organizations belong to the Consortium of Christian Study Centers, which uses the Apostles Creed as its statement of faith.

In the first third of the book, Cotherman traces the evangelical student center movement back to Schaeffer's L'Abri and the Canadian Regent College (not to be confused with Pat Robertson's Regent University). The rest of the book explores their institutional children and grandchildren. Drawing on interviews and archival research (including many revealing photographs), Cotherman's chapter on Schaeffer's Swiss experiment adds to a scholarly biography by historian Barry Hankins, as well as insider accounts from L'Abri alumni, including Schaeffer's ex-evangelical son Frank.

While a strong influence on the new Christian right, L'Abri's offspring are all over the religious and political spectrum. During the 1960s and 1970s, L'Abri attracted a mix of evangelical college students and countercultural seekers (Bob Dylan nearly visited). L'Abri's alumni include mainline seminary professor Linda Mercadante, a feminist who chafed under its conservative gender roles, and future gay Christian leader Mel White, who appreciated its attention to film and the arts. It also influenced the evangelical apologist Os Guinness, a descendant of the famous brewer.

Though less visible than L'Abri, Vancouver's Regent College has played an equally central role in the Christian study center movement. Led by former Oxford professor James Houston, it has something coveted by evangelical academia: a direct link to C. S. Lewis, who met regularly with Houston and his Eastern Orthodox roommate. Influenced by both L'Abri and Regent, California's New College Berkeley helped to incubate the burgeoning evangelical left. An outgrowth of the Christian World Liberation Front and the Jesus movement, its faculty have included Jacques Ellul devotee David Gill, evangelical feminists Sharon Gallagher and Susan Phillips, and Lutheran theologian Donald Heinz, whose most recent book *After Trump: Achieving a New Social Gospel* reflects these progressive sensibilities. New College Berkeley is also the home of *Radix*, a sister publication to *Sojourners* and *The Other Side*.

While forging ties with the evangelical left, some of the leaders of the Christian study center movement (including the Canadian James Houston) reached out to the Fellowship (also known as the Family), the powerful Washington based organization that sponsors the National Prayer Breakfast. Though these contacts were fleeting, they illustrate the elasticity of a campus movement that includes both the religious left and the religious right. Along the way, readers will encounter Calvinist R. C. Sproul's Ligonier Valley Study Center, which disseminated its message through a cassette tape ministry, a technology that was also embraced by Schaeffer's L'Abri. Though located on evangelicalism's right flank (its founder believed in young earth creationism), Sproul shared Schaeffer's more adventurous aesthetic tastes, expressing an affinity for the jazz of Thelonious Monk.

A flexible organizational form, Christian study centers have been able to flourish in a variety of cultural and political environments, where they have continued to make history.

Once wary of campus religious life, the University of Virginia is home to not one but two Christian study centers. Part of the surge of campus evangelicalism in the 1980s and 1990s, they were present for one of the most disturbing episodes in American history. After torch wielding neo-Nazis and white supremacists descended on the

Charlottesville campus, both centers sponsored events on racism and social justice. At a time when Turning Point and the political right have mobilized American college students, Theological Horizons (located in Bonhoeffer House) and the Center for Christian Study have resisted white Christian nationalism.

What is the future of the evangelical study center movement? If the past is prologue, it could wax and wane like its mid-century mainline Protestant predecessor, or it could stick around for decades. Whatever its trajectory, scholars of religion in American higher education should pay attention to this entrepreneurial and consequential movement.

J. A. Schmalzbauer
Missouri State University
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***Reformed Evangelicalism and the Search for a Usable Past: The Historiography of Arnold Dallimore, Pastor-Historian.* By Ian Hugh Clary. Reformed Historical Theology, vol. 61. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020. 266 pp. \$138.00 hardcover.**

Most everyone agrees that history is useful. Not everyone agrees on how history should be used. Since the mid-twentieth century, Christian historians have been debating the proper use of the past. In *Reformed Evangelicalism and the Search for a Usable Past*, Ian Hugh Clary enters that conversation by examining “the way that this concept of a usable past informed the writings of the independent historian, Arnold A. Dallimore” (18).

The book is laid out in seven chapters. After a brief introduction, the second chapter provides the backdrop to the debate among Christian historians over the question “Is there a Christian approach to church history?” Chapter 3 provides further background and gives a short biography of Dallimore, telling the story of his upbringing, education, pastoral ministries, and writing ministry.

The following section moves to Clary’s analysis of Dallimore’s historiography. Chapter 4 looks at his two-volume work on George Whitefield, analyzing how Dallimore dealt with three important themes in Whitefield’s life—celebrity, slavery, and revival—“themes that could suffer most at the hands of an ideological bias” (20). The next two chapters examine Dallimore’s shorter works, his biographies on Edward Irving and C. H. Spurgeon (chapter 5), and Charles, Susannah, and John Wesley (chapter 6). The final chapter provides a brief conclusion expressing appreciation for Dallimore’s legacy and lessons for the Christian historian.

In his summary of the debate over Christian historiography (chapter 2), Clary boils the conflict down to two positions: the supernaturalist perspective and the naturalist perspective. The supernaturalist perspective “seeks to determine how God has moved in the specific events of history” (30). Grounded in a belief in the providential rule of God over history, this approach tells not only the events of history but also its meaning. The naturalist perspective, however, views such interpretations as outside the discipline of a historian. Rather than attempting to discern the hidden mind of God, this approach relies on social sciences to explain the events of history.