

so often as a surrogate for national conversations about religion despite its still relatively small numbers nationally? Or that Mormons steadfastly believe ignorance of their faith is their biggest obstacle to national acceptance—despite their yearning for obscurity every time the national spotlight fixates on them?) This should not diminish the utility of what he has accomplished, however. Future studies will necessarily take up the task of elaborated interpretation and contextualization — and each one will owe a debt to Haws. He has provided subsequent investigators a voluminous documentary head start and an explanatory platform from which to work.

Because of this, Haws's work will be justifiably lauded in several circles. It helps correct a problematic bias toward the 19th century in Mormon studies, and offers scholars of American history and politics a rare exploration of Mormonism's place in modern electoral politics. *The Mormon Image in the American Mind* is written so clearly, so accessibly, that it will undoubtedly grace many an undergraduate classroom and coffee table alike. Scholars will discover theoretical and interpretative possibilities at every turn and even non-specialists interested in Mormonism and modern American politics will have, finally, a competent telling of a curiously neglected tale.

***Christian Fundamentalism and the Culture of Disenchantment.* By Paul Maltby. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2013. xiv + 228 pp. \$55.00 cloth. \$24.50 paper**

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Paul Maltby's *Christian Fundamentalism and the Culture of Disenchantment* describes and analyzes the extreme positions in America's culture wars: Christian fundamentalism and a postmodern disenchantment toward any authority. Fundamentalist epistemology assumes that "(1) Truth is divinely revealed, (2) the Bible is the primary medium for the delivery of that Truth, (3) Truth in the Bible can be immediately apprehended through a literal (pre-interpretative) reading (79)." By postmodernism,

Maltby means an “ironic cast of ... mind, which is most at home with cynicism, skepticism, and suspicion ... that which is elevated is vulnerable to demotion through parody and demystification” (147). He suggests that while the “percentage of Americans who conform to the profile of the disenchanted subject may be quite small,” these Americans, “found within urban communities of secular liberals ... by virtue of their disproportionately large presence in entertainment and the arts, in journalism and advertising, in civil rights and radical-democratic struggles, in higher education and scholarship ... [have] (alongside the inherently disenchanting effects of ongoing capitalist development)... instituted the culture of disenchantment” (15).

Maltby is clear that the boundaries of the groups inhabiting these extremes is porous and apparently contradictory attitudes can be manifest in any given individual (e.g., a believer in the Rapture laughing at parodies of preachers on *The Simpsons* television show). Examining the extremes of fundamentalism and postmodern disenchantment helps bring the underlying issues of the culture wars into focus. The reader comes away with a deeper understanding of the underlying cultural stances of those holding these extreme positions: unquestioning literalism vs. suspicious irony.

This book is not a survey or opinion poll, but an analysis of opposite ends of a spectrum. Nor does the book address questions such as the role of political commentary, talk shows, and electoral politics in American’s polarization. (A minor theme is that there is, for many humans, a desire for certainty which is satisfied by fundamentalism, a longing which needs to be recognized by the other side.)

Chapter One describes the contrasting views of history held by these two groups, contrasting dispensationalism, whereby history unfolds following a divinely ordained schedule, with postmodernism’s view of history as “a chaotic entanglement of contingent forces with unpredictable outcomes” (41). Dispensationalism’s classic statement can be found in the Scofield Reference Bible of 1909, and its ongoing importance is manifest in the estimated 28 million sales of Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth* and in the *Left Behind* books with combined sales of over 65 million. Postmodern contingency, on the other hand, does not necessarily deny any authority to a text, but opposes the absolutization of a text. It does not mean that “anything goes,” but that any statement is subject to question. Postmodern interpretations of the Bible recognize the context of both the text’s writing *and its reception*.

Chapter Two is a study of the “End Times” fiction produced by dispensationalists, and contrasts the interpretation strategies of white Christian

fundamentalists and a reader nurtured by postmodern irony and self-reflexive aesthetics. Fundamentalist Christian fiction is a branch of spiritual warfare fiction. It embraces doctrinal certainty, promotes a theocratic agenda (secular government is denied legitimacy), and focuses on the apocalyptic scenarios of the Book of Revelation. Maltby focuses on the “End Times” books of the *Left Behind* series which lack irony, equivocation, paradox and humor and contrasts the literary techniques of postmodern writers. For example, raptured women are domestic, wifely, submissive, and never assert gender equality, exhibiting a piety that diminishes their sensuality. The link between religious and political agendas is explicit: the federal government and peace initiatives are instruments of the Antichrist. The power and glory of God and Christ as Warrior are emphasized. There are dozens of pages detailing the torments of those unraptured. They have committed neither crimes nor corruption, but are guilty of unfaith.

Subsequent chapters unfold various other dimensions of the world-views of Christian fundamentalists and disenchanted postmodernists. Chapter Three challenges the antidemocratic strain in fundamentalism from the viewpoint of a pluralistic radical democratic politics. While recognizing the existence of progressive evangelicals, Maltby outlines the repressive tendencies of fundamentalism. Chapter Four contrasts a postmodern ecology with the fundamentalist’s dominionist attitude toward nature, epitomized in Ann Coulter’s words: “God said, ‘Earth is yours. Take it. Rape it’”(113). Chapter Five introduces painters who, with the possible exception of Thomas Kinkade, are unknown to the secular public, and analyzes the aesthetics of art popular with evangelicals. The book’s conclusion examines the cost of a culture of perpetual critique in a deficit of spiritual meaning. It also “considers how one vital strain of Christianity can flourish in terms concordant with the culture of disenchantment.” (This strain includes Gianni Vattimo, John Caputo and Norman Wirzba.)

There are minor quibbles, of course. The Biblical interpretations offered by Calvin and especially Luther were more flexible than Maltby allows. A greater concern is that — taken by itself — this book could reinforce the demonization of either extreme, at a time of political gridlock in American politics. But it will also help the reader understand why people at either extreme of the spectrum “just won’t listen to reason.” They employ different notions of reasoning. We are dealing with conflicting paradigms of interpretation and knowledge with no consensus about the force of the stronger argument.