

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.

CHURCHILL COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE

MARK GOLDIE

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

JEH (67) 2016; doi:10.1017/S0022046916001196

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

it, 'blood and wounds' spirituality was neglected: returning to it was the remedy. By 1748 the controversial hymns of 1745 were similarly no longer in vogue. The Sifting, Peucker argues, was the logical – though unintended – consequence of Zinzendorf's marital theology. After his death his Church's new leaders moved swiftly to distance it from radical religion. His son-in-law Johannes von Watteville (regarded by some as ultimately responsible for the catastrophe) was prevented from assuming sole leadership (the Church took on Zinzendorf's debts in return for his family ceding power); ordination of women as presbyters was abolished; access to the archives was restricted. Over time women's roles were greatly reduced, there was a gradual but determined departure from Zinzendorf's theology, new publications presented a revised image of him, and archival material that would contradict this was destroyed. All previous accounts of the Moravian 'Sifting Time' stand corrected by this magisterial survey.

LONDON

COLIN PODMORE

Preaching in Belfast, 1747–72. A selection of the sermons of James Saurin. Edited by Raymond Gillespie and Roibeard Ó Gallachóir. Pp. 294 incl. 1 frontispiece and 7 ills. Portland–Dublin: Four Courts Press (in association with The Representative Church Body Library), 2015. £50. 978 1 84682 535 4
JEH (67) 2016; doi:10.1017/S0022046916000907

The latest volume in the valuable series of early modern Irish church records produced by Four Courts Press and the Representative Church Body provides twenty-four selected texts from a recently discovered cache of sixty-one manuscript sermons that were preached by Saurin, a Church of Ireland clergyman of Huguenot descent, during his tenure as vicar of Belfast. In contrast to the printed texts, mainly dealing with major political or theological issues, that have hitherto monopolised the attention of Irish historians, these are the tools of a day-to-day ministry, written in large script for easy use in poorly lit pulpits, addressed to a congregation consisting mainly of tradesmen and small shopkeepers, and offering clear, well-structured discourses capable of being delivered in just over half an hour. There is one sermon on a state occasion, welcoming the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, and a few sideswipes at Catholicism, including a painstaking explanation of why Christ's commission to Peter did not after all support the pretensions of the papacy. For the most part, however, Saurin concentrated on matters of practical religious duty and morality, with a consistent emphasis on the need for faith to be accompanied by good works. The overall impression is less of a proud ascendancy Church than of a quiet, insistent piety.

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY,
BELFAST

S.J. CONNOLLY