

life are Schweitzer's). In a sense Moll is too taken up with the sometimes exaggerated nature of Schweitzer's language in this regard and too little concerned with the contents of what Schweitzer in fact writes. Fourthly, and finally, as Moll himself indicates in his discussion of autobiography as a genre, there is a necessarily summary and subjective aspect to such a form of writing. Schweitzer's presentation of his decision to go to Africa may contain discrepancies but these perhaps emerge from Schweitzer's contextually-based reflections on what was a complex process. At different times, different facets of the process will come to the fore. Indeed, discovering the truth about these matters, something which Moll claims to be able to do (see his rather old-fashioned language Rankean language on p. 37 about presenting things as they actually happened), is very difficult, raising questions about his absolute division between what Schweitzer himself says about various matters and what is 'historisches'.

This is a volume, then, that would have gained from being longer and engaging more with the available secondary literature (and indeed some of the primary literature, too. Note should be taken of the failure to refer to Schweitzer's *Wir Epigonen*, the text of a work that he had begun to write in Africa at the time of his internment. This was never published but formed the basis for his *Verfall und Wiederaufbau der Kultur* of 1923. Here there are a number of discussions of reverence for life, overlooked by Moll, who claims that Schweitzer's first discussion of the subject after 1912 appears in an early post-war sermon). While it contains much that is stimulating, many of the judgements are at least questionable. I share with Moll a scepticism about the way in which Schweitzer has presented himself, not least his penchant to see his most significant thoughts as emerging from moments of revelation; and I also think that there are times where Schweitzer is perhaps too assertive about the originality of his claims; and as a consequence I do not doubt that there is a certain complex artificiality to his self-presentation (though in this respect he is not exceptional). But such conclusions have not led me to think that Schweitzer's self-presentation is more myth than fact, and that, even if true, this would undermine the meaning of his life to the extent that Moll claims (see his concluding chapter [esp. pp. 186–7], which assumes that Schweitzer's reputation is almost exclusively built upon his self-presentation). The assessment of Schweitzer's life and thought is a complex task, and some of that complexity (as well as much else, some of which has not been covered in this review) has been illuminated by Moll. But precisely for this reason the latter's conclusions can appear too precise and objectivist.

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Secularism and religion in nineteenth-century Germany. The rise of the fourth confession. By

Todd H. Weir. Pp. xv + 304. New York: Cambridge University Press 2014. £60.

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Weir's study of the origins of secularism sheds light on the first cracks in the edifice of what was once widely, yet erroneously, believed to have been a Christian state.

We are introduced to marginal groups in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century such as the German Catholics who followed the lead of Johannes Czerski and Johannes Ronge rather than the pope, ‘free religious’ congregations that could not subscribe to traditional biblical tenets, as well as monism and ‘ethical culture’ for the more esoterically minded. These numerically insignificant groups are variously termed the religious left, rationalist dissidents, radical rationalists, church radicals, rationalist deists or simply dissidents and make up what Weir calls a ‘fourth confession’. The supra-confessional mentality of these establishment critics probably has more than a little to do with freemasonry, a system of morality which Weir only mentions *en passant*. It is no secret that not a few *Freigeister* – liberals but also socialists (Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel, Wilhelm Pieck) – enjoyed intellectual freedom in mainstream as well as ‘reform’ lodges. Materialism rooted in popularised accounts of science or, rather, pseudo-science, pantheism and atheism thus entered the German body politic. Weir touches upon aspects of an anti-Christian petit-bourgeois mindset which, in the twentieth century, proved very congenial to the belligerent anticlericalism of left-wing parties in the Weimar system and also to the poisonous nationalist, racist and antisemitic worldview of National Socialism. But Weir’s focus is not so much on the religious or ideological superstructures as on the socio-economic base of these quasi-religious groups and the political manifestations of their religiosity. Links between lapsed Catholics and Protestants with early forms of political liberalism are discussed. The focus is purportedly on Berlin, though Saxony was arguably the stronghold of non-mainstream politicised pseudo-religion. While one expression of anticlerical secularism has survived up to the present day (the youth dedication rite) and the numbers choosing to pay the compulsory administrative fee to officially leave the mainstream Christian Churches has in recent decades been increasing exponentially (over 400,000 adults in 2014 alone), the ultimate goal of the secularist movement, namely to completely sever the operational ties and purse-strings binding the Church to the state in Germany, is far from being achieved. Today the German state is presided over by a man who is a pastor by profession (though that has not stopped him living in open adultery) and the daughter of another Lutheran pastor is in charge of the government. Ironically, in spite of the record number of annual exits the Churches are still raking in record receipts, literally billions of euros annually, in the form of church taxes and government subsidies. Sadly, secularism seems to have made its peace with this dysfunctional system which, today, is patronised by parties calling themselves ‘Christian’.

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Methodism in Australia. A history. Edited by Glen O’Brien and Hilary M. Carey. (Ashgate Methodist Studies.) Pp. xix + 308. Farnham–Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. £70. 978 1 4724 2948 3
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Methodism was a distinctively British religious phenomenon; yet historically it became a broadly international religious movement that continually readapted to a myriad of local circumstances. Playing on that theme, this book coherently