

an added depth of analysis could only strengthen a cultural framework. It could be said, a “cultural” framework without it may not be a Western cultural framework at all. This omission causes one to ponder, what or whose “culture” are we speaking about? Moreover, this omission not only weakens, but also could even undermine this well researched and important book. An essential analysis given the sports world is among the most diverse institutions in Western culture. Nevertheless, I found the use of familiar concepts found in both religion and sport as a rich point of analysis. To be sure, the authors hit a stand up triple with its construction and have accomplished one of its goals as a springboard for further study on the topic.

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Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction. By Christopher H. Evans. (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2013, Pp. xi, 403. \$44.95, paper.)

“If one rereads the pages of this book,” writes Christopher Evans in the book’s epilogue, “one does not read a ‘happily-ever-after’ story about how Christianity realized the kingdom of God or the New Jerusalem coming to America.” Far from presenting Christianity in North American history as one epic tragedy, however, Evans sees this “very messy, very human” story as evidence of American ingenuity through periods of conflict, social transformation, and rising diversity (360). Pluralities abound in this dynamic environment: peoples, nations, languages, Christianities, and—particularly for Evans’s project—histories. No linear chronicle could capture a historical landscape so inherently protean, so Evans employs a fresh strategy to introduce his subject: he builds a narrative in dialogue with classic surveys of American religious history. The histories written by Robert Baird, Philip Schaff, William Warren Sweet, Sydney Ahlstrom, and a few others appear as contextual signposts that reveal not only what happened, but also what choices and selections historians have made (6). The result is an effective introduction to both the subject and the field that will prove useful for nonspecialists and advanced readers alike.

Evans builds a narrative that begins with New England Puritanism and runs through to today's "pluralistic cacophony" (12), giving a thoroughly Protestant emphasis throughout. He insists that the Puritans gave Americans their "psychological center" with their fascination for covenant theology and the reality of human sin (21–22). Their striving for a virtuous society colored and oriented the intellectual world of early settlements so much that reverberations of this worldview persist into the twenty-first century. America, for these Christians, was the embodiment of biblical prophecy; it held a unique commission to transform the world for Christ. Protestants sought this transformation through churchgoing, revival, mission, and education—areas of society so culturally interconnected that little of the American experience could avoid their influences. Evans places his greatest emphasis on the nineteenth century, arguing that this period manifests the profound resilience of the Puritan ethos. Here he makes the boldest offering of the book, contending against critics and pundits who instead notice a decline in Puritan influence over American history (14).

Christian intellectual traditions could endure, despite growing diversity, industrialization, immigration, new religious movements, and modern secularism, thanks to two major aspects of Christianity in America: sectarianism and popular religion. Ernst Troeltsch's church/sect dichotomy governs Evans' assessment of the impact of dissenters and innovators on the Protestant mainstream. Consequently, whoever resisted their dominating culture from within gets tagged as a "sectarian," which leads to curious applications of the term. Such groups as Catholics and Mormons become examples of the quintessential sect, though both saw themselves as avowedly anti-sectarian. (Catholics, for their part, advanced a universal church model that called for an end to church divisions and Mormons attempted a full-scale gathering of Israel.) Processes of democratization (as argued famously by Nathan Hatch) and theological creativity (E. Brooks Holifield) offer more precise insights into how the Puritan ethos persisted and was interrupted than Troeltsch's theory of sectarianism.

As themes, though, sectarianism and popular religion do help to draw out the constant tensions between social groups and their

struggles to balance disestablished religious society and religious diversity with their convictions of faith. Evans recognizes the subtleties of applying these themes to history, and when they do not illustrate well the tensions he works to explain, he notes how other historians have grappled with them. The subtitle is apt: this book makes its greatest contribution as an introduction to the broad landscape of histories that have been written about American Christianity. Though his emphasis on Protestantism somewhat bucks the trends evident in other contemporaneous works on American religious history that treat non-Protestant traditions less marginally, notably, Stephen J. Stein, ed., *The Cambridge History of Religions in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Catherine A. Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin, eds., *American Christianities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), Evans does provide an expert and accessible overview of the historiography of American Christianity.

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Printing, Power, and Piety. Appeals to the Public During the Early Years of the English Reformation. By Brad C. Pardue. (Leiden: Brill, 2012, Pp. ix, 237. \$144.00); *Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures: Religious Identity during the English Reformation.* By David J. Davis. (Leiden: Brill, 2013, Pp. xv, 243. \$146.00.)

The first monograph to emphasize how the English Reformation was promoted, enforced, and sold top-down was *Policy and Police* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), by the late dean of Tudor historians, G. R. Elton. Brad C. Pardue's *Printing, Power, and Piety. Appeals to the Public During the Early Years of the English Reformation*, a volume in "Brill Studies in Medieval/Reformation Traditions," and David J. Davis' *Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures: Religious Identity During the English Reformation*, one of the newest in the Brill series "The Written Word," serve as a reminder how far the field has come since Elton's book first appeared in 1972. Although neither book can fairly be considered entirely original in subject, both make worthwhile contributions.

Pardue's main purpose is to examine how William Tyndale, Thomas More, and Henry VIII each appealed to the public through their writings and (in Tyndale's case, especially)