

“typical” Southern preachers. He has helped us to see that Southern religion was (and is) complex, and one element in that complexity was an urban-oriented rational orthodoxy.

Beyond this general contribution, *The Gentlemen Theologians* is instructive for a number of other reasons as well. First, it shows that the sociological methodology so influential in contemporary historical studies can fruitfully complement, rather than oppose, the traditional dependence on literary sources. This observation leads to a second, that the history of theology is illuminated when examined within its larger social and intellectual setting. Holifield’s argument that these theologians formed their theology in response to the needs of their social class might seem a truism in one sense—all thinking takes place within a social setting—, but much theological history has examined ideas in isolation from society. This study suggests that more theologically oriented historians can usefully combine social and theological history. Third, Holifield’s analysis of the role the Scottish Common-Sense Philosophy of Thomas Reid played in the thought of these Southerners reinforces our growing awareness of its importance in American intellectual life. Where previous studies, recently popularized by Garry Wills’s *Inventing America*, have shown the basic place of Common-Sense Realism in eighteenth-century thought, Holifield’s work indicates its continuing importance into the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Gentlemen Theologians is a thoroughly researched, carefully written work that will be of interest to American church, social, and intellectual historians. It should prompt further reexamination of Southern religion and comparative studies of the North and West.

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GARY LAND

Moore, R. Laurence. *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. xvii + 310 pp. \$14.95.

Despite spiritualism’s popularity in nineteenth-century America, there have been few histories of the movement that are useful to the scholar. In this work, R. Laurence Moore of Cornell University examines both spiritualism and parapsychology in order to understand their function or meaning in the American past. He does not, however, attempt to provide a complete history of these movements.

Moore argues that spiritualism, perhaps the most popular cultural phenomenon of the 1850s, was both a reaction against the materialistic

tendencies of science and—through its emphasis on observable phenomena—a product of positivism. It appealed to those who were disenchanted with Christian orthodoxy, and it declined partly because of the development of liberal Protestantism and its own inability to become scientifically respectable. Although in its early stages spiritualism seemed compatible with social reform, its belief in eternal evolutionary progress and its unwillingness to distinguish clearly between good and evil made the reform connection tenuous. More significantly, spiritualism was psychologically helpful to those who believed in it, and through the specific traits associated with mediumship it offered a route toward independence and professionalism for nineteenth-century women.

With motivation similar to those of the spiritualists, Moore points out, the parapsychologists sought to undermine scientific materialism. The founders of the Society for Psychical Research, James Hervey Hyslop, and J. B. Rhine attempted through scientific methodology to fill the spiritual vacuum left by the decline of religious belief. Recent parapsychologists, however, have recognized that the scientific method is inadequate for measuring paranormal dimensions of reality. Spiritualism and—for most of its history—parapsychology, Moore concludes, “have been equally guilty of placing a greater value on coherence than on recognizing the baffling complexities of human experience” (p. 242).

On subjects such as spiritualism and parapsychology it is almost a necessity that the writer spell out his assumptions, an obligation that Moore fulfills. He states that although he does not mean to suggest that spiritualist and psychical phenomena are demonstrably established or even likely, he does have “every intention of persuading the reader that a belief in the ‘supernormal’ is frequently compatible with sensible human behavior and that the opposite attitude does not guarantee wisdom” (p. xvi). He doubts whether these movements will ever gain scientific standing and expects that psychical research will disappear into the obscurity that now engulfs spiritualism.

Moore’s study is an intriguing one, showing, for instance, how modern culture is pervaded by the scientific method, and also pointing up the significance of Christianity’s decline for the emergence of these movements. The author has thoroughly grounded his conclusions on an analysis of unpublished manuscript collections and spiritualist and psychical periodical literature. Despite the extensive effort that has gone into this study, however, some questions remain, the answers to which may affect Moore’s interpretation. As is common with most historical research, Moore’s account of spiritualism depends largely on the writings of an elite population. One cannot help wondering whether or not that elite’s interest in scientific credibility was characteristic also of the movement’s popular

base. William B. Hill, a late nineteenth-century Seventh-day Adventist evangelist in the Midwest, encountered a considerable number of spiritualists for whom spiritualism seems to have been more religious in nature than that of the Eastern elite. If there is any way of examining these popular attitudes, the validity of Moore's argument for the movement as a whole could be tested.

Second, the relationship between spiritualism and parapsychology needs further examination. Although it is clear that some of the early researchers of psychical phenomena were also spiritualists, Moore says nothing about the attitude of spiritualists generally toward parapsychology, nor does he note whether recent parapsychologists have been interested in spiritualism. Analysis of this relationship may clarify the differences between two movements that, as Moore indicates, had much in common.

Considerable work remains to be done in the effort to understand these movements, but Moore has provided a study that will shape future research. He has produced a book that is fascinating both in its detail and in its general interpretations. In reading this volume, historians of American culture will find that what seems a periphery phenomenon illuminates the whole.

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Sider, Ronald J. *Christ and Violence*. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979. 108 pp. Paperback, \$4.95.

In *Christ and Violence* Ronald Sider attempts to give a theological justification for the involvement of Christians in the use of political power to change unjust economic and social structures and to safeguard mankind from the pangs of hunger and the annihilation of a nuclear conflict. Sider's attempt is especially significant, since he is writing from within the Peace-Churches tradition, which has advocated radical non-resistance and separation from the political world. One must note that Sider's concern is the whole world rather than the United States of America.

To understand some of the proposals that Sider summarizes in *Christ and Violence*, one should also read his former book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, a book that should be required reading for all those who profess to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Sider appeals for a simpler life style on the part of individual Christians—one that will make more food available for the starving masses of the third world—, and he even suggests the boldness for Christians to pool their possessions and share them more equitably. As for churches, he calls for less emphasis on the construction of "representative church buildings" that under the pretense of serving God