

encouraged the church to embrace doctrinal inclusiveness as a policy and thereby better understand how the Presbyterian Church, and perhaps other mainstream churches, have arrived at their present situation" (4).

Starting with the seemingly correct assumption that the Presbyterian controversy was largely "a conflict among generals" (5), Longfield examines the cultural backgrounds, theological positions, social viewpoints, and ecclesiological strategies of six of the key players in the conflict: J. Gresham Machen, William Jennings Bryan, Henry Shane Coffin, Clarence E. Macartney, Charles R. Erdman, and Robert E. Speer. Those six men spanned the ranks of the Presbyterian leadership of the time, with Machen, Bryan, and Macartney holding firm to the theological right, Erdman and Speer to the center, and Coffin to the liberal pole of the continuum. Ecclesiological strategy and the vision of the Presbyterian Church's role in a Christian America created a different split, with Machen as the only Southerner holding for succession as the correct move if the theological struggle could not be won. That militant attitude forced the moderates to side with the liberals and to opt for pluralism.

The decision to tolerate pluralism, as noted above, eventually spelled disaster for the Presbyterian Church. But, holds Longfield, Machen's extreme was no better. It also would have led to disaster.

Longfield argues that a moderate solution would have been best, but that moderation is often hard to come by in the heat of controversy. "Perhaps," he concludes, "the contemporary mainstream churches can, in some manner, do what the Presbyterian Church, torn by controversy in the 1920s, would not or could not do, and affirm a normative middle theological position with clear boundaries" (235). Any such recovery of identity, the author goes on to say, must be done on the basis of a biblical faith.

Longfield's sophisticated study not only provides its readers with a lesson in history, but it sets forth a vivid case study for those denominations that are currently facing some of the same issues as Presbyterianism in the 1920s and 1930s. Because of both these contributions, *The Presbyterian Controversy* deserves to be seriously studied.

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GEORGE R. KNIGHT

Marsden, George M. *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991. 208 pp. Paperback, \$12.95.

Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism by Marsden is an edited collection of previously published essays which have appeared in

various symposia and periodicals. The volume is conveniently divided into two major sections entitled "Historical Overview" and "Interpretations."

The "Historical Overview" is a condensed digest of what has already appeared in Marsden's two best-known studies, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), and provides beginners with a grasp of the unfolding of American fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

The essays in the section "Interpretations" are thematic elaborations of the above-mentioned major monographs. Two of these essays deserve particular attention: one on evangelicalism, "Evangelical Politics: An American Tradition" and the other on politics, "Preachers of Paradox: Fundamentalist Politics in Historical Perspective." Also very striking by their insights are Marsden's essays on the evangelical relationship to science, entitled "The Evangelical Love Affair with Enlightenment Science" and "Why Creation Science?" Noteworthy, likewise, is the essay on fundamentalist Biblical scholar J. Gresham Machen, "Understanding J. Gresham Machen."

The chapters on evangelicalism and science are must reading for anyone interested in understanding the somewhat paradoxical relationship between science and fundamentalism in the 20th Century. Marsden deftly traces the tragic saga of how the metaphors of "warfare" overwhelmed an apparently growing consensus that science and religion did not have to be at loggerheads. His most outstanding contribution, however, is the lucid portrayal of the philosophical underpinnings which have contributed to the entire theological development of fundamentalism and evangelicalism. According to Marsden, it is not that fundamentalism and evangelicalism are nonmodern, reactionary, or antiscientific, but rather that they represent an interpretation of science and history based on a Baconian and Scottish Common Sense Enlightenment understanding of reality. And without these undergirding philosophical orientations, understanding what the battle between conservative Christians and modernity revolves around is practically impossible.

For those interested in matters of evangelical historiography, the last chapter is probably the most inviting. This sympathetic interpretation of the place of Machen in the history of fundamentalism (and its later neoevangelical stepchild) provides some interesting clues as to Marsden's historiographical assumptions. According to him, there is a growing recognition of the impact of the Holiness-Pentecostal contribution to twentieth-century evangelicalism. But the tone of this essay evidences his ongoing fascination with the Reformed, Princeton model which is seen as the central, definitive force in the late 20th-century evangelical intellectual formation. Such a Reformed provenance might be accurate for the hard

core of Northern fundamentalists (and their heirs in early Neoevangelicalism), but whether this model will work for the majority of post-1960s evangelicals is seriously in question.

Finally, two further features of these essays should be noted: 1) the rich bibliographical references in the footnotes read like a Who's Who of the most important edited symposia and monographs in recent evangelical historiography, providing a ready guide to the more recent Reformed, Princeton-oriented evangelical studies; 2) Eerdmans is to be commended for using footnotes rather than endnotes, thereby providing quick and easy reference.

Indeed, Marsden's *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* could be profitably employed in a survey course on American church history for undergraduates or even serve as supplementary reading in a graduate seminar on evangelicalism or 19th- and 20th-century intellectual history.

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WOODROW WHIDDEN

Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. 1, The Roots of the Problem and the Person*. New York: Doubleday, 1991. x + 484 pp. \$25.00.

From the late eighteenth century onward, those who have rejected the NT picture of Jesus have struggled to come up with a "historical" Jesus, a Jesus whose persona can be confirmed through conventional historical research. The results of these "quests for the historical Jesus" have been disappointing at best. Though each new picture of the historical Jesus meets initially with enthusiastic scholarly acclaim, it is never long before the "new" historical Jesus is scornfully rejected by those with a different image to put forth. In *A Marginal Jew*, John P. Meier reexamines the quest for the historical Jesus and once again sets out to see what, if anything, can be known about Jesus through the application of the historical method—or at least through what he maintains is the historical method.

Meier devotes much of the first half of this volume to showing just how limited the sources for the historical Jesus are. Secular material, i.e., the scattered references in Tacitus, Lucian, Suetonius, and Josephus, show that Jesus lived and was executed and give a rough estimate of when these things happened, but do little more. Nor are the many recently discovered apocryphal gospels of much use in discovering the historical Jesus, since they are demonstrably dependent on the canonical gospels.

The accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are thus the only really valuable sources in reconstructing the historical Jesus. But here, too,