

Reviews

Timothy E. W. Gloege. *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. xv + 307 pp. ISBN 978-2-4696-2101-2, \$34.95 (cloth).

Timothy Gloege's *Guaranteed Pure* explores the relationship between American religion and business during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By focusing on the history of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute, Gloege shows how the development of modern evangelicalism was linked to important shifts in American business culture, chiefly the rise of consumer capitalism.

The book begins with the advent of famed revivalist Dwight Lyman Moody. Though scholars have usually discussed Moody's career with reference to his pioneering evangelistic techniques or media savvy, Gloege illumines the former shoe salesman's use of business ideas to promote the Christian message to the masses in the years following the Civil War. This unique mode of outreach, termed "Christian work," shirked denominational sensibilities for an evangelical realism that encouraged a personal relationship with God, plain reading of the Bible, and the practical import of the life of faith. Business leaders latched onto the power of Moody's gospel with an eye toward its import for social order. After strikes in the late 1870s raised these leaders' fears of class warfare, they eagerly backed Moody's proposal for a new "Bible Institute" in Chicago that could train laypeople to convert the urban working classes and restore social stability.

Gloege then introduces Reuben A. Torrey, whose individualistic spirituality intensified Moody's evangelical realism. Invited to lead the Bible Institute, Torrey deepened the roots of this evolving religious movement in the soil of Gilded Age capitalism through his theological innovations (such as treating the Bible like a business contract between God and the believer) and pedagogical expectations (training students at the institute to treat evangelism like salesmanship). As with his discussion of Moody, Gloege helpfully shows how far-reaching Torrey's influence was among Protestants at the time, as his pragmatic, experiential focus drew followers from across the theological spectrum. However, because Torrey also appealed to Pentecostals and populists, the future of Christian work seemed to be in doubt as a respectable option for the middle class. Dispensationalism,

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a theological system that downplayed certain radical implications of the faith, provided a temporary fix. The Bible Institute ultimately found its true strength in the rising tides of American consumer culture through the leadership of Henry Parsons Crowell, the former head of Quaker Oats. Crowell had revolutionized American business through his creative use of marketing to pitch oatmeal—with the famous Quaker face and “Pure” tagline—directly to consumers. Crowell assumed leadership of the faltering Moody Bible Institute (MBI; renamed soon after the evangelist’s death in 1899), bringing his business acumen to bear on the creation of a new brand of Christian faith.

The influence of Crowell’s consumer-driven orientation could be seen throughout his tenure at MBI. From his attempt to develop a uniform revival model that could be replicated nationwide to his conscious appeal to business norms in the marketing of MBI’s brand through various publications, Crowell forged a “consuming faith” that targeted the middle class and showcased the “fluidity between sacred and secular” in the Gilded Age (138). The most important example of this approach was *The Fundamentals* project. Although the significance of this series of publications is usually explained through its encapsulation of various strains of anti-modernist theology, Gloege shows how the true import of the project (the combined effort of Crowell and oil baron Lyman Stewart) was its indebtedness to the branding and promotion of consumer goods. Like Quaker Oats’ sidestepping of traditional wholesalers’ brand-less, producer-driven model, *The Fundamentals* bypassed the established authority of ministers, denominations, and seminaries to appeal to conservative Christians directly through a giant direct mail campaign. As with his oatmeal packaging, the branding of Crowell’s new project depended on the creation of a timeless trademark. Like the smiling Quaker, this calculated reference to “old time religion” that stood apart from any specific denominational creed obscured the real novelty of the product itself.

Gloege’s concludes his work with a discussion of the various challenges MBI faced as a result of its remarkable accomplishments. For example, though MBI continued to serve as an important player in American Protestantism throughout the expansion of evangelicalism after World War II, ultimately its influence was mitigated by the proliferation of other institutional, educational, and cultural options in the growing evangelical market. This was an unforeseen result of the very power of MBI’s innovations: “Having pioneered the idea that religion was something to be consumed rather than practiced, MBI became lost in the shuffle of competing brands ... a victim of its own success” (233–234).

This excellent book is a welcome addition to the growing number of recent studies that have detailed the various connections between

business and faith in modern America, such as Kevin Kruse's *One Nation Under God* (2015), Darren Dochuk's *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt* (2011), and Bethany Moreton's *To Serve God and Wal-Mart* (2009). Gloege's work is at its best in its rich explanations of these connections. Not only does this book show important overlaps in business and religious leadership networks, but it also revels in the details of the remarkable complementarity of their ideologies. The book's chapter on *The Fundamentals* alone should be required reading for both scholars of religion who are seeking to understand the indebtedness of (seemingly ancient) Christian faith to modern cultural currents and scholars of economic and business history exploring the (seemingly secular) origins of consumer capitalism. To the extent that observers frequently miss both these dynamics is a testament to their very power. Gloege has, therefore, written a book that gives a way into "the seeming objectivity of it all" (87), contextualizing religious and economic movements that can so often operate with unquestioned timeless statuses.

Occasionally, the way that Gloege details how beholden evangelical religion was to a consumer orientation underplays the very real concerns of laypeople attending MBI or reading its publications. Conservative Protestants had good reasons to look beyond denominational identity or worry about encroaching modernism before Crowell and company reached them, not unlike the consumers who had their own expectations for their breakfast food before Quaker Oats marketed to them. MBI and its leaders showcased tremendous power, but consumers' own desires for purity, of either orthodoxy or oatmeal, were understandable. This is a minor quibble. Gloege has produced a well-written and compelling account that deserves to be widely read.

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John Woodland. *Money Pits: British Mining Companies in the Californian and Australian Gold Rushes of the 1850s*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2014. xiii + 282 pp. ISBN 9781472442796, \$124.95 (cloth).

The gold rush in popular imagination paints a picture of rugged landscapes of a young and wild United States, traversed by solo