

W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789*, (Nyack, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 220 pp. \$85.00 ISBN 0521864046

In the years since he took leave of the University of Durham, Ward – now Emeritus Professor of Modern History – has set a torrid pace in the production of materials bearing on European Christianity in the eighteenth century. While his earlier career had been marked by the release of such materials as *Religion and Society in England: 1790-1850* (1972) and the co-editing of *The Works of John Wesley* Vol. 19 (1990), his retirement years have unleashed a spate of books which one can only assume were long in the percolation.

Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History (2006) completes a trilogy begun with the 1992 release of *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (hereafter *PEA*). The latter work is still the best treatment available demonstrating that the upsurge of Protestant religion we associate with the United Kingdom and New England in the 1730's was in fact a movement whose chronological origins lay in central Europe, and whose reach extended from central Europe direct to America's middle colonies as part of the wider fabric of a movement which also included the better-known Anglophone developments. Already in that 1992 work, Ward demonstrated a mastery of the eighteenth-century German materials on the basis of which his expansive interpretation could be offered. He returned to this era again with the 1996 release of another study of European religious history: *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*. The volume under review here, *Early Evangelicalism* (hereafter *EE*) can best be appreciated when considered as a focus on the Christian thought of the leaders who figured prominently in the trans-Atlantic movements he has earlier described. Earlier, he masterfully sketched out *movements* in various locales in Europe and early America; now he puts under the lens the leading *ideas* which he finds characterized the movements' leaders.

This progression onward from 1992, while it certainly stands on a sound rationale, at the same time makes hefty demands on the reader by the time it reaches its 2006 denouement. A reasonably-informed reader could without too much difficulty follow the argument of the early work even in its complex demonstration that it had been the late seventeenth century Counter-Reformation persecution of the descendants of the Hussites which had occasioned a spiritual re-awakening, affecting the young most of all, and that this awakening had spurred the migration to Saxony and the re-birth of the *Unitas Fratrum* movement presided over by Zinzendorf. This, the earliest of all manifestations of the eighteenth-century awakening had been Central European and it had had its own dissemination beyond Saxony into Western Europe, the United Kingdom, the middle colonies of early America and numerous global missionary ventures. The breathtaking sweep Ward achieved in 1992 has required us all to think about eighteenth century movements more expansively. The 2006 volume seems, on the other hand, less for the reasonably-informed reader; it appears to assume that the earlier volume (*PEA*) has been well digested and that we have been left, craving for more.

The perceived value of this 2006 volume, *EE*, will therefore be determined by the level of readiness and expectation the reader brings to the task. Without the background of the 1992 volume, the English reader of *EE* will find himself awash in the analyses of many Christian leaders in the period following 1670 about which he knows nothing – even to the point of admitting that their names are unrecognized. While on the one hand, we find here welcome analyses of the better-known Spener, Zinzendorf, Wesley and Edwards, one must be prepared also to be introduced to the ideas of Oetinger, Lavater, Swedenborg and Jung-Stillung. Many a reader will find that his or her lack of prior familiarity with such names and personalities makes

Ward's treatment of them seem to be of very limited usefulness. The specialist reader, however, who is actively seeking information about the leading ideas of such eighteenth-century Christian notables, will perceive (correctly) that he has stumbled upon a goldmine. Once more, in *EE* Ward has read his German sources as has no other writer in English on these subjects.

A few hard questions linger after a reading *EE*. Readers standing within even broad confessional Protestantism will have reason to wonder at the inclusivity of Ward's selection of leading persons to be treated. Of course it is clearer to us than it may have been to eighteenth-century observers that the likes of Swedenborg and Jung-Stillung were crossing the boundaries of Protestant orthodoxy; we after all benefit by the prior judgments made by our forebears. But with that granted, it still needs to be admitted that Protestant evangelicals in the period under review were more capable than Ward seems to acknowledge of determining which movements in their time were 'outré' and not to be trusted. All this is to say that Ward's treatment of the thought of transatlantic evangelical leaders has almost the sociologist's expansive embrace. It is not that Ward is disinterested in theological questions and a poor judge of what was wholesomely Christian; it is that he displays the chronicler's intention to tell all, and with little differentiation.

Given my own research interests, I will opt for the 'goldmine' verdict about *EE*. For those wishing to begin to read in-depth about eighteenth century religious movements, it is Ward's earlier *PEA* which represents the better entry into the subject.

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