

David A. Hollinger. *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015. 228 pages. \$22.95.

In *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History*, University of California, Berkeley, Emeritus historian David A. Hollinger provides a collection of essays that show how “liberalizing Protestants” “became great organizers, institution builders, and social reformers, searching for ways to enact what they understood to be Christian ideals” in the civic arena. The 2013 volume is new in paperback for 2015. The title of the book comes from Acts 2:1-11, which recounts how “devout Jews of every nation” begin speaking one another’s languages “with cloven tongues.” Hollinger uses the passage as a metaphor for exploring how the faithful reconstitute their identities after recognizing the revelatory dynamism of human multiculturalism. The preface and chapter 2 capture central arguments of the volume and offer advanced students in worship a sophisticated look at the cultural evolution of mainline Protestantism in the United States.

For Hollinger, liberalizing Protestants also adapt by learning to digest modern epistemologies; a focal point in his writing is scientific discovery as resources to move into post-Protestant modes of thinking and being. They produce an “intellectual gospel,” that “dispensed altogether with” faith in Christ but perpetuated through an “ethic of science” morals and values “learned within a Christian milieu” (82-102). Without oversimplifying the modern rivalry between the scientific community and committed Christians for cultural capital in the early twentieth century, Hollinger suggests how science became a kind of religious calling unto itself, in addition to the protestant acceptance of scientific discovery.

Subsequent essays characterize William James as modeling a scientific calling. James’s searches for God did not result in faith but protestant liberalization. Hollinger’s narration of James could help students taking worship courses to fulfill requirements see other fruits of theological inquiry, even ones detached from the faith they once knew.

After Cloven Tongues of Fire also includes fine-grained analyses about how the discovery or investigation of a tacit religious identity like Jewishness can illuminate fields of inquiry or bring new dimensions to a figure’s train of thought. Consider two examples from Hollinger. First, he suggests how understudied and unarticulated Jewish identities in research about feminism need to be made explicit because that knowledge is vital for having the whole story. If Jewish women were a majority and central presence within leadership of feminist movements in the United States, why isn’t feminism associated with Jewish identity in the same way that social reforms with respect to race are associated with Protestantism (146)? Here, his questioning also entails more than meets the eye. It reconsiders “identity politics” to think about how to attribute ideas and actions to particular peoples without confining them to any population. Second, Hollinger also pulls from his own intellectual autobiography to recall how Frederic Wakeman disclosed that Hollinger’s mentor, Joseph R. Levenson anchored works like *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* in a deep profound concern about “communal Jewry in North Atlantic West” (164). Identities figure into scholarship in a myriad of latent and indirect but powerful ways. Instructors looking for a nuanced and challenging investigation of how human identity influences scholarship will find Hollinger’s assertions provocative and his questions and recommendations bold and necessary.

The concluding essays of Hollinger's volume reminisce about his formation as a historian and the generational serendipity he experienced in finishing a doctorate when jobs were plentiful. Another piece reflects upon a three-year Lilly Endowment consultation addressing concerns about the rising secularity in university education. Hollinger summarizes the proceedings and responds to unnamed (but clearly remembered) interlocutors who questioned his secular position that Christianity has enjoyed ample reach within U.S. higher education. His final article "pushes" religious liberals to debate within their religious communities for the sake of creating public discourse about religious ideas that has more "cognitive plausibility" (199). It also encourages critical engagement with religious ideas in general rather than choosing to avoid them. Hollinger promotes as an alternative attending to democratic etiquette that checks sectarian ways of entering into conversation that may dismantle robust and charitable cultural conversation and learning. An epilogue closes *After Cloven Tongues of Fire*. It meditates upon the cultural savvy of Richard Niebuhr to curate elements from protestant Christianity to resource thoughts for actions faithful to the urgencies of his time. Though the cohesion between essays is not always apparent, researchers and teachers of worship will find in *After Cloven Tongues of Fire* guiding lights for understanding how U.S. Christianity divided into associations "evangelical" and "ecumenical" and how the latter worked for change on earth as in heaven.

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