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[Book Review of] American Protestant Theology: A Historical Sketch, by Luigi Giussani

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Giussani, Luigi. *American Protestant Theology: A Historical Sketch*. Translated by Damian Bacich. Montreal; Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. xxxiv + 238 pp. Hardcover, C\$100.00.

Many scholars in the field of American religious and theological history may never have heard the name of Luigi Giussani (1922–2005) because he spent most of his life in his home country Italy. His proficiency in English was limited to reading literacy, and the majority of his writings were not concerned with American religious history. Giussani was a Catholic priest, theologian, high school teacher, professor, and founder of the international movement *Comunione e Liberazione*. He was closely acquainted with Pope John Paul II and the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. His influence on Italian and European religious life and culture was tremendous, and he may be considered one of the “most formative theologians of young Italian minds” in the second half of the 20th century (ix). Although most of his works deal with other topics, some of his early writings deal specifically with the history of American Protestant theology. Giussani had a particular interest in Protestant-Catholic dialogue and the experiential religious sense found in American Protestant theology. To make this earlier research available to a broader public, McGill-Queen's University Press translated into English the original Italian edition *Teologia Protestante Americana: Profilo Storico*, a fruit of his post-doctoral research (1965–1969), published by La Scuola Cattolica at Venegono Inferiore in 1968.

The book contains five chapters that are preceded by an introduction by Archibald J. Spencer and followed by three new appendices that did not exist in the original Italian edition. The first chapter on the Puritan origins deals specifically with the religious inspiration for the formation and character of the initial American colonies, its intellectual life and literature, its Congregationalist ecclesiology, its pragmatic attitude, religious alternatives to Puritanism, and issues of the second generation of Puritanism.

The second chapter turns to various aspects of New England theology such as the rise of Arminianism and the unconscious adoption of aspects of human works in the covenant theology. Thus although Calvinists theoretically vehemently rejected Arminianism, they unconsciously implemented some of its aspects in their practice that then threatened their view of God's supreme initiative in salvation. Two large sections in this chapter discuss Jonathan Edwards, his activities in the First Great Awakening, and his literary productions, and critique him and the beginnings of anti-Trinitarian thought, showing Giussani's special interest in the spiritual elements of Edwards' life. Two smaller sections deal with the New Divinity and New Haven Theology respectively, followed by another section on the Mercersburg theology and the conservative reaction to the new trends in Calvinism.

The third chapter constitutes the biggest chapter of the entire book, discussing the theological Liberalism of the 19th and early 20th century. First, Giussani delineates antecedents of the Liberal movement, particularly its epistemology, the emphasis on God's immanence, human positivism, and Christ as the center of reality and life. Afterwards Giussani shows how

liberal theologians promoted these characteristics and which contributions particular American universities (Union Theological Seminary, Chicago School, Boston, Oberlin, etc.) added to the field. The last two sections deal with the Social Gospel, especially as presented by Walter Rauschenbusch and Washington Gladden, and the fundamentalist and humanist reactions to the Liberal movement.

The fourth chapter turns the attention to Realism (empirical trends and Neo-Orthodoxy) and its distrust of the Social Gospel, and exemplifies Giussani's special interest in Reinhold Niebuhr (111–122) and Paul Tillich (122–132). The sections on these two theologians deal particularly with their most important literary productions and their theological contributions.

The final chapter on “recent trends” (pre 1960s) gives a brief survey of neo-liberalism, continuing fundamentalism, ecumenical theology, attempts to reconstruct theology by means of new categories, ethical theology, and radical theology. The three new appendices deal with Reinhold Niebuhr's view of history, the foundations of his ethics, and the philosophy of Edgar Sheffield Brightman (1884–1953).

Those looking for a volume that provides the most recent scholarly insights in American theological history will be disappointed. A perusal of the bibliographic references reveals that the latest sources consulted by the author date back to 1968. Although the last Italian edition, *Teologia protestante Americana: Profilo storico*, appeared in the year 2003, the author evidently abstained from familiarizing himself with the scholarly discussions and discoveries of the last thirty some years. Theological trends, such as black theology, feminist theology, liberation theologies, that trace their origin back to the 1960s were probably too new at the time of writing for the author to make reference to them. The original Italian edition contained several elements, such as a map of the mentioned primary universities in the United States (7) and an extended table of contents (195–200), that were beneficial to the readers but that the present English edition is missing.

Readers will soon recognize that *American Protestant Theology* is not arranged in a “strictly chronological nor thematic” order (xxiii). Giussani took a particular interest in “the personal nature of religion” in American Protestantism which is why he selected specific “organizations, movements, personalities, and key ideas” (xx). One should therefore not expect a comprehensive history of American theology but should be aware of the particular focus of the descriptions and discussions. This is probably one of the big differences between Giussani's volume and more recent works on the history of American theology such as Mark Noll's *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (2002), E. Brooks Holifield's *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (2003), and Roger E. Olson's *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction* (2013).

Considering the author's relative anonymity and the unique emphasis of the book, Archibald J. Spencer's introduction (vii–xxxii) will prove to be of special practical value. The theologian of Baptist persuasion produced

an excellent overview of Giussani's life, work, and theology. Without this introduction many readers would have wondered why a book that has been published almost fifty years ago and that fails to add anything to recent scholarship was republished. Nevertheless, the present work may be of particular interest for a reason that exceeds the brief survey of Protestant theological history in North America: The book was originally written at a time when the world anticipated improved relationships, unity, and reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants (after Vatican II), hopes that many people currently connect to the pontificate of Pope Francis. Giussani's observations of American Protestantism from a Catholic perspective may play a role in the inter-faith dialogue and everyone interested in these should be familiar with his book.

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Gnasso, Alessandro, Emanuele E. Intagliata, Thomas J. MacMaster and Bethan N. Morris eds. *The Long Seventh Century: Continuity and Discontinuity in an Age of Transition*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014. viii + 315. Paperback, \$72.95.

This book, published through Peter Lang in 2014, is a collection of papers presented at a conference at the University of Edinburgh in 2013. It is an edited volume containing 315 pages with fourteen chapters. Eleven chapters were written by a single author, and three were written by multiple authors. The main body of the book begins with the Preface on page one and ends on page 298. This is followed by a six-page list and description of the contributors, and finally a ten-page index. Each chapter focuses on the seventh century A.D. within a particular region, moving from England to as far east as Khuzistan.

Two chapters explain the purpose of the conference: the Preface, written by Emanuele E. Intagliata and Bethan N. Morris, and the Afterword, written by Thomas J. MacMaster. Intagliata and Morris state that their purpose is to examine if the seventh century represents a break in the *longue durée* between the sixth and eighth centuries. In their view, studies in the seventh century have been too fragmented by scholars bound by their respective regions and disciplines. Consequently, a fragmented picture of the history of Europe in the seventh century as well as in the Middle East has been the result. In the Afterword, Thomas J. MacMaster elaborates further that previous scholarship focused on the Latin-speaking West and, specifically, on Christianity and its literature. In the last twenty years seventh-century scholarship has undergone a paradigm shift. For example, MacMaster explains that regions that were not considered important are now considered vital. Thus, this volume integrates works from the regions of Arabia, Iran, Scandinavia, and others in order to create a broader picture of the seventh century. This review will focus on two articles: one, the topic of which is not very familiar to the reviewer, and the second on a region with which the reviewer is familiar.

The first article of this volume after the preface is titled "Sutton Hoo and Sweden Revisited," written by Alex Woolf. Woolf compares and contrasts the