

1986

*Ministers of Reform: The Progressives' Achievement in American Civilization, 1889-1920* by Robert M. Crunden (Review)

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Repository Citation

Dorn, J. (1986). *Ministers of Reform: The Progressives' Achievement in American Civilization, 1889-1920* by Robert M. Crunden (Review). *Church History*, 55 (2), 246-247.

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This “great Scottish triad” advanced understanding of the Bible, particularly as great literature, and deepened appreciation of the nature of personal belief in God. They were less successful in handling theological matters, partly because they were convinced that the issues were not doctrinal, partly because they were linguists and literary scholars. All too frequently they were unskillful in joining their faith and criticism, “in their seeming inability to recognize that theology might serve as a mediator between the two,” observes Riesen (p. 433).

Riesen admits that he does not have easy answers to the question of why the Free Church, which took pride in being “the strictest evangelical body in Christendom,” produced these believing critics who were the cause of such disruption in the church. He proposes influences both internal and external. By 1914 it was apparent that the Biblical Revolution had run its course; higher criticism had come to be accepted or at least tolerated in the major Scottish Presbyterian churches.

Riesen’s work is fair, thorough, and instructive, although the book still looks and reads like a dissertation with its typed, camera-ready format, an oversupply of footnotes (432 in chapter 3), and numerous sub-headings.

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L. GORDON TAIT

*Ministers of Reform: The Progressives’ Achievement in American Civilization, 1889–1920.* By ROBERT M. CRUNDEN. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984. xii + 307 pp. \$10.95.

First published in 1982 by Basic Books, *Ministers of Reform* is now available in paperback. It offers a wide-ranging assessment of progressive endeavors; its special interest to historians of religion lies in its all-pervading emphasis on the influence of evangelical backgrounds on twenty-one (out of a larger sample of a hundred) key figures.

In Robert Crunden’s view, progressives were too diverse to be defined by a shared platform or by membership in a single movement. What they had in common were their moral values and the belief that America needed spiritual reformation to fulfill its mission. He finds them also sharing similar generational experiences. All but two born between 1854 and 1874, his “first generation progressives” grew up with evangelical values and Republican loyalties. Had the world not been changing so rapidly, they likely would have entered the ministry. It seemed too constraining intellectually, however, and there were few alternatives. Thus, they had to create new roles (and in many cases even new professions) to serve as outlets for their moral passion and creativity. They had to be “ministers,” though not in the traditional sense. As if to guard himself against the criticism that his definition of “progressive” is too exclusive, Crunden explains that the progressive ethos eventually outgrew

its original evangelical parameters; appealing to Catholics, Jews, and nonreligious persons, "the civil religion of American mission soon transcended its origins and became a complex of secular democratic values" (p. x).

Crunden's sketches of the "paradigm experiences" in the lives of such individuals as John Dewey, George D. Herron, George Herbert Mead, Robert Park, and Frank Lloyd Wright are intimate, empathetic, and generally convincing. One is especially struck by the importance of the religious dimension for those ordinarily thought of only in "secular" terms. Separate chapters on muckraking and the Pure Food and Drug Act, the Progressive Party convention in 1912, and the "Presbyterian Foreign Policy" of Wilson, Bryan, and Lansing cover mostly familiar ground (though the information on illness at Versailles is novel and fascinating); in each case, Crunden probes flaws in progressive (that is, evangelical) moralism—an interest in exposure and indignation more than in results, absolutism and rigidity, provincialism and intolerance. His favorite subject is the arts; two chapters on the creativity born of "innovative nostalgia" in literature, painting, music, and architecture are exceptionally good, the passages on Wright and Charles Ives achieving brilliance of analysis.

The book has enough fresh information to interest specialists; its readability and variety make it accessible to undergraduate students as well.

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*The Varieties of Religious Experience.* By WILLIAM JAMES. Edited by Frederick Burkhardt and Fredson Bowers. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985. li + 699 pp. \$45.00.

*The Varieties of Religious Experience* is the thirteenth title in Harvard University Press's authoritative, standard edition of the complete works of William James. Historians and religious studies scholars will delight in this volume. In addition to giving us a scrupulously edited text, it contains numerous appendixes with early drafts of the manuscript, letters James wrote while working on the project, an introductory essay by John E. Smith, and a narrative history of the preparation, delivery, and subsequent publication of the text. As such, it constitutes a definitive edition of the major work written by an individual who, along with Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Waldo Emerson, ranks among the three most original religious thinkers America has yet produced.

*The Varieties* is a masterpiece of scholarly prose. Its rich descriptions and neat arrangement of source material have made it one of the few classics of American literature; it remains fresh with each rereading and speaks anew to each successive generation. The reasons for this continued appeal are not