

Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America

Michael McClymond, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007. 2 vols: 1178 pp. \$225.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 0313328285 (set).

The *Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America* is an ambitious and successful attempt to cover the topic of religious revivals and revivalism in North America. While there are scholars who have certainly provided significant treatment of this topic, such as Mark Noll and Harry Stout, none have produced an “academic reference work devoted explicitly and wholly to the topic of religious revival in the context of the United States and Canada” (xv). *ERRA* is a one-of-a-kind reference and research tool.

Editor Michael J. McClymond points out that other dictionaries and encyclopedias have covered such topics as evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Renewal, but none have “used the experience and literature of religious revival as their organizing and guiding principle” (xv). He goes on to say that research on revivals has focused on particular denominations, “racial boundaries,” and specific regions. *ERRA* is an attempt to offer “both a smaller, intricate view and a larger, panoramic perspective” of the topic (xvii).

McClymond currently holds the Clarence Louis and Helen Irene Steber Chair in Theological Studies at Saint Louis University, and is the founder and president of the Institute for World Christianity. The 118 contributing scholars are mostly historians, but contributors also include theologians, scientists, psychologists, and PhD students. The Board of Review, which conducted a double-blind review process, consists of notable scholars such as Randall Balmer, Gaston Espinosa, and Ann Taves. ATLA members David Bundy and Don Haymes are contributors, and Ron Crown was acknowledged for making “valuable suggestions for additions to the list of archival sources” (xi). In all, an impressive and diverse group of scholars provided significant input.

The first volume contains 227 A-Z articles which fall into five major subject areas: people, revival events, religious denominations or groups (associated with revivals), revival practices or phenomena, and themes in revivals. Coverage includes mainly Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Holiness, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Nondenominational Christian groups. Due to scant “documentation for an ongoing revival tradition,” there is no coverage of revivalism among Episcopalians or American Orthodoxy (xxi). The volume features 115 illustrations, including etchings, drawings, photographs, and variety of other media. Each article has a “Further Reading” list at the end (some of which include internet resources), and there are terms in bold typeface throughout that provide cross-referencing. Also included in this volume are a list of entries, a preface, an introduction, and a list of contributors and contributions. Both volumes include the full index.

Volume two is devoted to primary documents and further research. There are 106 primary document entries (153 individual texts), which are arranged chronologically into six categories: Roots of the Revival Tradition (1527-1727), First Great Awakening and the Rise of Evangelicalism (1728-1799), Second Great Awakening, Antebellum Era, and Civil War (1800-1865), Postbellum Revivals and the Holiness Movement (1866-1899), Emergence and Growth of Pentecostalism (1900-1948), and Late Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, the Charismatic and Third Wave Movements, and the Globalization of Revivals (1949-2005). This volume also includes two lengthy,

non-annotated bibliographies. The first, “A Select Bibliography on Religious Revivals and Revivalism in North America,” consists of 138 pages of book, article, and dissertation citations. The second, “A Select Bibliography on International Christian Revivals,” is 75 pages and is divided into sections that cover general works and 13 geographical regions of the world. Lastly, volume two provides a “Guide to Archival Collections Related to Religious Revivals in North America,” which includes an annotated list of 105 major archival institutions and individual collections relevant to the study of religious revivals.

ERRA is unique in that it doesn't stop with only A-Z articles. There are several value-added features that make it the most useful research tool on the topic of religious revivals. One such feature is the illustrations, which are plentiful and well chosen. It is obvious that McClymond made an effort to include a diverse collection (in terms of gender and race), as well as a collection that represents the complete time period associated with religious revivals. Examples include a photo of Rev. Mary Cagle at a tent revival in 1900 (471), a copy of the music and lyrics to the hymn “Just As I Am” (213), and an 1890 drawing with the caption “The Howling Methodist and the Howling Monkey” by revival critic and artist Watson Heston (22).

Another valuable feature is the variety of good discussions in the preface and introductions. The terms “revival” and “revivalism” are differentiated in the contexts of both Calvinist and Arminian theology. Calvinists generally define revival “as an unplanned event that reflects God's initiative and ‘revivalism’ generally has a negative connotation for them, since it may suggest manipulation, theatricality, insincerity, and emotionalism.” The editor goes on to say that Arminians assert that revivals occur through divine-human cooperation, including such strenuous exertions as prayer, fasting, and the persuasion of potential converts. In summary, “Calvinists, who wait on God to bring revival, exert themselves to cause it to happen. Arminians, who exert themselves to cause revival, also have to wait on God” (xix). Later in the preface, McClymond offers seven characteristics of revivals as “a way of making sense of the many phenomena associated with revivals”: 1) intensified experience, 2) bodily manifestations, 3) extraordinary occurrences, 4) issues of spiritual discernment, 5) issues of lay and clerical authority, 6) conflict and division in church and community, and 7) the emergence of new associations, organizations, and institutions. He points out that while the first characteristic is almost always present, “few revivals would clearly manifest all seven characteristics” (xxii).

In the introduction to the first volume, McClymond discusses the academic study of religious revivals. His basic assertion is that the topic has been somewhat neglected due to “the prevailing university culture” and “the ethos of the churches and church-based seminaries” (xxv). McClymond could have chosen to provide a standard volume of articles with a modest bibliography. Instead, he provides one volume of articles and then produces yet another volume with primary sources, two lengthy bibliographies, and a guide to archival collections. Clearly, he is interested in stimulating more interest in this topic as a significant field of study.

The primary documents are another significant feature. In the same way that the illustrations throughout the first volume support the articles and give readers a window into the events and people involved in revivals, the primary documents in the second volume are yet another type of witness. McClymond describes these sources as a “documentary history [that] consists primarily of first-hand accounts of religious revivals” (xiii). The structure focuses on “the application of a chronological framework, a desire for first-hand narratives, and a desire for inclusiveness” (xiv). The narratives in this section are fascinating. Not only do we get to read Maria Woodworth-Etter's diary entry of her 1890 revival meetings in St. Louis, but also the St. Louis newspaper accounts of these meetings (203-212). Also included is a farmer's 1740 description of George Whitefield's visit to Connecticut

(32-34), a 1905 “thrilling story” of a drug-addicted madam’s conversion (231-232), and even a journalist’s 1995 account of serpent handlers in Alabama (354-359). This collection of first-hand accounts is an invaluable resource, providing researchers with a richness and depth on the topic that would be impossible to obtain through only secondary material.

My criticisms are minimal. While I’m very impressed with the first, 138-page bibliography, I also found myself wishing for some sort of organization other than by author, such as topical divisions. The cross-referencing in the A-Z articles is good but not necessarily self-explanatory. In order to make use of words in bold typeface, researchers must look them up in the index. This makes sense when one sees the number of entries that can be associated with any given term. However, when one considers the prolific use of hyperlinks involved in online research, less experienced researchers might soon simply give up if they begin with the assumption that terms in bold type refer to full articles. It’s probably splitting hairs, but I also find the title slightly misleading. McClymond explains the scope of *ERRA* content and justifies the exclusion of non-Christian religions, as well as certain Christian denominations. However, the title doesn’t really reflect this. Also, it’s interesting that he says that “America” really is referring to “North America,” but there are relatively few articles that have to do with Canada, and even fewer Canadian contributors. I suppose my title for *ERRA* might be “Encyclopedia of Christian Revivals (excluding the Episcopal and American Orthodox traditions) in North America (but don’t expect to see a lot that’s Canadian).”

In summary, any theological reference collection will be richer for including *ERRA*. This encyclopedia is a significant resource for both the undergraduate student in an introductory Church History course as well as the PhD student looking for a dissertation topic.

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