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*Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation
Opponents* (review)

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terms such as 'drunken love fests' (p. 71), 'pushed the envelope' (p. 174) and 'in hot water' (p. 178) were also distracting from an otherwise well-written work. The footnotes are thorough.

This book gives the impression that it seeks an audience beyond the academic realm, and there is no reason to suppose it would not achieve this. This is not, however, to detract from its academic merit. I would recommend this book to students or specialists pursuing research in Early Modern history, particularly within the specialities of gender, sexuality, and life at court, along with those interested in the specific case studies simply for their own sake.

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Simpson, James, *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, hardback; pp. xii; 346; 3 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. US\$27.95; ISBN 9780674026711.

James Simpson's study of English evangelical reading habits between 1520 and 1547 is a polemical work that is bound to divide readers. It is, in effect, a refutation of a particular historical narrative that paints the Reformation as a decisive step in the West's evolution from medieval superstition to modern liberalism, in which the act of private reading (not having the text mediated by an institution) is celebrated as pivotal.

In the first chapter, Simpson sketches the scholarly stand-off existing between those advocating this position (e.g. David Daniell) and those English Reformation revisionists who raise doubts about the loss of Catholic forms of piety and bonds of community (e.g. Eamon Duffy). He then examines the process of translating the Bible into English and the heroic status accorded to William Tyndale and other Protestant martyrs who died in the fight to make the Bible available to the common reader. Simpson introduces Thomas More's arguments against Tyndale and reconsiders the way in which 'More and the bishops seem so behind the times, whether intelligently or not ... because the vernacular Bible was so unstopably popular' (p. 56).

In Chapter 3, 'Salvation, Reading, and Textual Hatred', Simpson shows his hand; evangelical reading, he argues, gave rise to four paradoxes which made it a negative, rather than a positive, experience. These are summarized

as: 'to love the text, one must hate it; "do it" means "you can't do it"; faith alone means no faith; and the plain text is premised on the ambiguous text' (p. 105).

These paradoxes require some unpacking. Simpson's argument is that reading was a type of 'works' but Reformers argued that salvation was only through grace. Thus, scripture rendered the reader abject and insecure; reading was a worthless activity if one was not saved, and yet Biblical reading became important as a *post hoc* sign of salvation. If faith alone were sufficient then reading scripture would be redundant, so devotion to Biblical reading erodes the place of faith as sole requirement for salvation; and although Reformers insisted that the 'literal sense' of scripture was available to any reader, their insistence on certain conditions, such as Tyndale's claim that 'the text of Scripture can be properly understood only if it is first written on the heart' (p. 125) and their castigation of 'bad readers' (those who read and came to different, non-evangelical conclusions), reveals that only a certain kind of guided reading would produce the 'literal sense' required. For Simpson, this is evidence that, rather than being the parent of liberalism, evangelical reading in sixteenth-century England was the parent of modern Fundamentalism, in all its illiberal glory.

Chapter 5, 'Bible Reading, Persecution, and Paranoia', analyses sections of scripture in terms of its telling a tale of loss and betrayal, in which foes persecute the godly, such as the Psalms. This interpretation is then very interestingly linked to the politics of the reign of Henry VIII. For example, Henry's desire for Anne Boleyn is paralleled by David's for Bathsheba. The fact that the Biblical picture is of grace deriving 'from a single source of unpredictable power' (p. 151) resembles the fragile position of the courtier dependent on the favour of the King, who may prove quixotic. The careers of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (beheaded on 19 January 1547) and Thomas Wyatt (suspected of being one of Anne Boleyn's lovers, pardoned and died aged 39 in 1542) are examined and the imperilled state of their existence exposed (despite both being devout Protestants).

Chapter 6, 'History as Error', argues that evangelical reading devalued history almost to nothingness, due to its need to abolish 'a particular history' (p. 186), that of the Church prior to the Reformation. Simpson observes the erasing of historical differences between the Old and New Testaments when discussing Luther's Law and Gospel: '[t]hese terms are not specific to a period of history, nor do they designate any historical unfolding. Instead

they designate the Law by which Christians are damned and the promises by which they are saved; Law and Gospel are both dispersed across the Hebrew and Christian scriptures' (p. 201).

In the last sections of the book, Simpson returns to Thomas More, and argues that his response to evangelical reading and the impact of the vernacular scriptures was more nuanced and intelligent than most historians have credited. His defence of an older Catholic tradition of reading was based on the premise that 'texts are trustingly made and remade in human history by human institutions' (p. 223). Simpson shows clearly how More's position opposes all the dimensions of evangelical reading he has thus far examined. Sadly, in his attempt to refute the new mode of reading advocated by English Protestants, More entered into the same state as those he opposed, eventually backing the persecution of those he viewed as heretics.

Simpson's conclusion that 'Tyndale and More were both the victims of a new, immensely demanding and punishing textual culture marked by literalist impersonality' (p. 282) is bound to be controversial. So too is his implication that we are still wrestling with the direct heir of that textual culture, religious Fundamentalism. This is a brilliantly written, fascinating book, and it deserves a very wide readership. Not all will agree with Simpson, but all will learn something new and valuable.

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Stahl, Harvey, *Picturing Kingship: History and Painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008; hardback; pp. 464; 60 colour & 50 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. US\$85.00; ISBN 9780271028637.

Picturing Kingship, Harvey Stahl's posthumously published examination of the *Psalter of Saint Louis* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France MS lat. 10525, c.1265) is the product of impressive scholarship sustained over many years. Stahl builds meticulously on the research of those that have preceded him. He also relates his investigation to contemporary interpretations of illustrated medieval histories, both biblical and secular. Many aspects of the manuscript are explored; it is presented as an outstanding example of Parisian medieval book production and as an expression of its royal owner's personal concerns with the ideals and practical demands of kingship.