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The Spiritual Journals of Warren Felt Evans: From Methodism to Mind Cure ed. by Catherine L. Albanese (review)

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Nova Religio, Volume 22, Number 3, February 2019, pp. 166-168 (Review)

Published by University of California Press



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style of prose that relies on the familiar (and too often overly dense) jargon of anthropology and sociology. Because they are preceded by such highly narrative and journalistic introductions, these largely theoretical sections feel clunky and create a dissonance that requires some effort on the part of the reader to resolve.

The most successful chapters in *A Communion of Shadows* are those examining death and mourning photos and alleged “spirit photographs.” The aforementioned unevenness is least noticeable here, where the author achieves a synthesis of idea and prose that is seamless. By narrowing her focus and analysis on specific aspects of the intersection of photography and religious life, Lindsey draws the reader into the world she is examining. In these chapters, the feeling of wonder that must have saturated everyday life in the newly photographic world remains palpable even as Lindsey dissects and examines it.

Despite *A Communion of Shadows* being a unique resource on a largely unexamined facet of American religious experience, there remains some confusion as to the intended audience: Is it the author’s intent to present a popular book with serious scholarly chops or a scholarly resource with highly narrative introductions and interludes? It seems a little too much of both, but not enough of either to make an easy answer apparent. Nevertheless, I would encourage those seeking a greater understanding of American religion in the nineteenth century, and perhaps even those interested in photography as an artistic medium with important social dimensions, to read this text. *A Communion of Shadows* may not be the conclusive tome it aspires to be, but it provides a solid jumping off point for further investigation.

Aaron Duggan, Independent Scholar

The Spiritual Journals of Warren Felt Evans: From Methodism to Mind Cure. Edited by Catherine L. Albanese. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016. 303 pages. \$45.00 cloth; ebook available.

In the lengthy introduction to the journals of Warren Felt Evans, Catherine Albanese gives a very helpful timeline of his eclectic spiritual affiliations. His family raised him in the Congregationalist tradition, though after attending college he became a Methodist and a lay preacher for the church. After his marriage to Charlotte Tinker, the couple took an interest in Swedenborgianism. He eventually left the Methodist Church because the ideologies became incompatible for him. It is possible that, like others before him, he became a student of Phineas Quimby due to a long, protracted illness. Yet Evans also studied

medicine and received a diploma from a board of physicians, so he also had some medical training. It is conceivable that after only a couple of visits to Quimby, Evans combined his Swedenborgian and medical knowledge to grasp something similar to the Mind Cure theory. The influence of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy was also evident later in his life. Eventually, he would be identified with the "New Thought" school, declaring, "all diseases originate in the mind. The states of the mind are the body's health or malady" (10). Albanese declares Evans to have been the "single individual who most shaped the intellectual and practice oriented direction of what became New Thought" (1).

Albanese argues that Evans' theology borrows from each part of his varied religious background. From Methodism, he borrowed the idealism of perfectionism and sanctification. He claimed that the "Holy Spirit and the Providence of God seem to be moving members of all Christian churches to seek a higher and deeper experience in religion" (19). From Swedenborgianism, he borrowed the language of a new way out and a divine order (19, 21), and from his Congregationalist roots, he appropriated the term "consecration" (20). All of this led to Evans' version of New Thought. He claimed that mental states affected "the appearance of the external world, and tended, in some degree, to adjust the outward universe in harmony, both in appearance and reality, with our spiritual condition" (25). His journal is therefore a record of Warren Felt Evans' theological journey.

In the pages of this journal, the reader meets a person who struggles with his health and his ever-expanding belief system. While Evans was drawn to the life of the itinerant preacher and the emphasis on holiness in the Methodist tradition, his poor health often meant that he could not keep up with the rigors of travel and weekly preaching. His diary shows that he was not always healthy enough to do what he loved, such as this entry from 30 March 1862: "Sabbath. It is now two months since I have preached, otherwise than in private conversation. I have passed through a painful sickness, and am yet far from being fully restored" (203).

Yet Evans lived a deeply meditative life. He read voraciously and recorded many of the authors and titles of the books and essays that he read. He reflected on how these impacted his prayer life. Much of his journal indicates the transformation of his beliefs about forgiveness, the world of the spirit, how one was to live a holy life, and justification by faith. For instance, after complaining that he has not been able to preach for two months (22 June 1862), he writes, "In my religious views I am an Eclectic. Many years ago all prejudice was banished from my mind, and I have sought for truth with persevering earnestness, and have found it everywhere" (204).

One can also see the influence of Swedenborgianism on his fledgling New Thought perspective. Writing 3 July 1865 Evans observed:

Every passage of Scripture is an influx of the [Lord]’s life. . . . By means of some passage of the Word we come within the sphere of celestial society whose state is expressed by that passage. This can be made available in the removal of diseased states of the mind. Of this I have had experience. (244)

While generally New Thought would argue that disease is under the control of the mind, the passage above has added spiritual and scriptural matters to the equation. Evans’ 4 November 1865 entry claims: “The life of the body is from the soul & all diseases originate in the mind. The states of the mind are the body’s health or malady. The body lives from the soul, and the soul from God, whose life descends through the heavens above” (247). Clearly, Evans had begun his New Thought journey by 1865.

The introduction by Albanese is an invaluable companion to this journal. The authority on American metaphysical religions has divided the journal chronologically into smaller groups of years. As editor, she made choices as to how much to correct. She chose to leave most of the author’s voice intact, unless she thought clarification was needed. She also includes an occasional photocopied page, with Evans’ original handwriting, for the reader’s interest.

It might have been nice, however, if Albanese had included the wealth of information from the introduction at helpful points in the journal, either as short introductory remarks for each section or as footnotes. I found myself flipping back to the introduction a lot for years of reference, wondering whether a particular section represented Evans’ Methodist years or his introduction to Swedenborgianism, for instance.

Overall, this journal signifies an important reference for those of us who research in the field of New Thought. Collecting the ruminations of Warren Felt Evans on theology for reference is a valuable contribution to scholarship.

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A Pope of Their Own: El Palmar de Troya and the Palmarian Church. By Magnus Lundberg. Uppsala University, Department of Theology, 2017. Free online access only: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1098857/FULLTEXT02>.

Dan Brown’s last novel, *Origin* (2017), features a sinister right-wing Spanish schism of the Catholic Church—with a pope of its own—the Palmarian Church, headquartered, and with a massive cathedral, in a tiny Andalusian village known as El Palmar de Troya. The Palmarian Church really exists, but Brown is not famous for his accuracy. In an